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OUR MASTER'S
FOOTSTEPS

WHEELER

OUR MASTER'S FOOTSTEPS;

OR,

Bible Class Notes for Thoughtful Girls.

BY

CHARLOTTE BICKERSTETH WHEELER,

AUTHOR OF

'MEMORIALS OF A BELOVED MOTHER,' 'GLEAMS THROUGH THE MISTS,'

'CHIMES FROM BY-GONE YEARS,' ETC.

'I have given you an Example.'

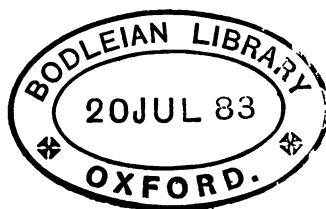
'Leaving us an Example that ye should follow His steps.'

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INTRODUCTION.

THIS volume is not intended for Sunday scholars, for whom many more suitable books are provided ; but it has, by God's blessing, awakened deep, abiding interest in a Bible Class for educated girls in their teens, for whose use it was written.

It has occupied much of the author's leisure during the last fifteen years ; and it is her most earnest hope and prayer that many a mother and teacher, many a solitary student, pondering Our Master's Footsteps in the four Gospels, may find some fresh light on the priceless gems that lie half hidden in almost every verse. How brightly a diamond of truth, before unnoticed, flashes into glorious beauty if a single ray of light fall upon it ! There is but one Light-Giver—the Spirit of Truth Himself ; but animated, thoughtful words, made more earnest and real by the unconscious eloquence of loving, tender eyes, are often His channels of blessing.

We, who have the responsibility of training the mothers of the leading men of another generation, should seek, by God's help, to lay the foundation of their faith very deeply, where no assaults of infidelity can shake it ; for these are dangerous days, and perhaps worse are coming. God only knows.

We shall do well to remember that our words, however true, will not bear the 'hall-mark,' the genuine ring, of truth, unless our daily life be a practical commentary upon them. Ah ! what Divine help, what deeply humble prayer and watchfulness that needs !

Sometimes, whilst earnestly pleading for a blessing on the coming Bible Class, we realise nothing in ourselves but utter emptiness ; we think, "I shall pass this way but once ;" no future Sunday will find me giving this Bible Class again to the

same listeners, who, in this critical stage of their life-journey, are trusted to me, and "I have nothing to set before them." Well, let us 'go and tell Jesus.' Who, whatever else He may answer, never says, 'Trouble Me not.' It is comforting to remember that it is often by small things that He blesses. The tender touch of a mother's hand on her child's head is but a little thing, as he kneels beside her, learning the Lord's Prayer; yet, after half a lifetime spent in forgetting mother, and home, and God, the sudden memory of that 'touch of a vanished hand' may awaken in the lost wanderer's heart its very first dim consciousness of what 'Our Father' really meant, and means *still*, even for him.

In the later revisions of these Bible-class Notes, the writer has partly availed herself of the Revised Version, especially where it has seemed explanatory of the Authorised Version, or has expressed the same thought in fewer words.

The chronological order of many of the events in the Sacred History is a deep difficulty; that followed in the notes is taken from a 'Harmony of the Four Gospel Narratives,' according to Greswell's 'Harmonia Evangelica.*' For other gratefully acknowledged help the writer is indebted to various sources, and particularly to the 'Critical and Explanatory Pocket Bible,' in three volumes, by Dr. D. Brown and the Rev. A. R. Fausset.

May the world's Great Teacher, Who, with such blessed results, bestowed such infinite pains on His one pupil at the well of Sychar, mercifully bless the study of these Notes to many of His own dear children in their onward journey to that Home where we, who now behold as 'in a mirror, darkly,' the reflections of Divine realities, shall, in the glorious light of Christ's abiding Presence, see all things clearly, and know even as we are known!

C. B. WHEELER.

SUFFOLK HOUSE, SOUTH NORWOOD,
March, 1883.

* 'The Gospel Treasury,' Elliot Stock.

OUR MASTER'S FOOTSTEPS.



ST. MATTHEW.

PRELIMINARY REMARKS.

I.

THE Gospel History, if arranged in order of time, begins Luke i. In that chapter we have John Baptist's wonderful birth, and all that we know of his parents. We have Gabriel's visit to Mary, his announcement of Christ's Incarnation, her sojourn with Elisabeth, her song of gladness, 'My Soul doth magnify'; Mary's return home, about the time of John Baptist's birth, and the triumph song of his father, Zacharias: 'Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel,' etc. This brings us to the period mentioned in St. Matthew i. 18.

II. THE GENEALOGIES OF ST. MATTHEW AND ST. LUKE.

There are three great points of difference between them.

1. Matthew gives Joseph's genealogy; Luke probably Mary's.

2. Matthew takes the natural order of time, while Luke goes back, ending with the sublime words: 'Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God.'

3. Matthew only traces the descent as far back as Abraham, ending with Joseph, the husband of Mary. Being Christ's

legal and reputed father, it was important to prove that he also belonged to the line of David.

Abraham was the first, and David the last, in connection with whose line Messiah was promised.

Three idolatrous kings are omitted in verse 8. Joram was the ancestor, not the father, of Uzziah. Many possible reasons are assigned for this omission—perhaps they were omitted as being the immediate descendants of that supremely wicked woman, Athaliah. Moreover, it does not say in verse 17 that there were fourteen *reigns* between David and the Babylonish captivity, but fourteen *generations*. Thirty years are reckoned for a generation. The kings omitted are Ahaziah, Jehoash, and Amaziah, who reigned between Joram and Uzziah.

III.

The writer of this Gospel, Matthew or Levi, was a publican, or taxgatherer, residing at Capernaum. He wrote with a special view to the Jews; and his is the earliest of the Gospels. He wrote before the destruction of Jerusalem. The words (Matt. xxiv. 15), 'Let him that readeth understand,' are clearly written as a caution to those on whom the peril was coming, not to neglect the Divine signal for flight.

CHAPTER I.

1. **THIS** verse is a summary of the first seventeen verses.

2. Must we read these names? some of you are thinking; fearing, perhaps, to find them empty, dry, and uninteresting—even un instructive.

Yes, we must really read them; but you will find more in them than you think. In the first place, each name (even those of which I can tell you nothing, from verses 13 to 15) represents a whole history, full of the keenest interest to him who bore it, and a life that is going on *still*, just as *our* lives will be going on millions of years hence. Where shall we *be* then?

We see in this verse, as in several succeeding ones, that the

line of descent is often through a younger son: Jacob and Judah, for example.

We know the meanings of the names in the first fourteen generations:

1. Abraham—Father of a great multitude.
2. Isaac—Laughter, joyful surprise.
3. Jacob—Supplanter.
4. Judah—Praise.
5. Perez—Breaking forth.
Zerah—Rising.
Tamar—Palm-tree.
6. Hezron—Dart of joy.
7. Ram—High, or mighty one.
8. Amminadab—My people are willing.
9. Nahshon—One that foretells.
10. Salmon—Peaceable, or rewarder.
Rahab—Wide.
11. Boaz—Strength.
Ruth—Beauty, or a friend.
12. Obed—Worshipper, or servant.
13. Jesse—He is.
14. David—Beloved.

The names to which no number is prefixed are those of the mother or brother of the direct descendant, in whom the line is traced.

3-6. Four women are named here; of these, two, Rahab and Ruth, were Gentiles by birth; Tamar and Bathsheba, Jewesses. All of them, except Ruth, had a blot on their names; which shows us how grace can reach even those afar off.

A peculiar interest attaches to Obed's birth. His father was a noble character; the Old Testament describes few more earnestly devout men.

The name of Ruth has been almost a synonym for loving constancy and unselfishness.

What a second spring-tide of happiness it must have been

to the aged sorrowful Naomi when she nursed the child of her faithful daughter-in-law, who had been 'better to her than seven sons.' Hold fast by your love to your parents; let *nothing* ever come between you and them. The great blessing, honour, and joy of Ruth's life all grew out of her devotion to Naomi, which God rewarded.

It is next to impossible to live for others without bringing happiness into your own lives, as well as theirs. What blessings flowed into Ruth's life through Naomi, and into Naomi's life through Ruth!

Not long before, the sorrowful widow had said, 'Call me not Naomi (pleasant), call me Mara (bitter), for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me' (Ruth i. 20).

God's mourning children should not despond thus; He can so easily show them that their all, even for this life, was not buried in such or such a grave. Were our dearest earthly hope blighted for all time, we can still fall back upon 'the infinite resources of God,' the Friend who *never* fails us.

David is called, in verse 6, 'David the king,' as the first of the royal line of Messiah.

7. Solomon is the type of a glorious beginning, a mournful close. Oh! to *finish* our course with joy! What a grand aim in life that is! But to do this you must *begin* well, begin *now*—give your Heavenly Father your *spring*-time with all its promise, not autumn's withered, crumbling leaves. What would *they* be worth, when the world has had all you have to give, and can do no more for you?

Rehoboam shows us the results of taking bad advice. The son of the wisest of men was perhaps the most foolish king in Scripture history. He took the wrong turning in life from the very opening of his reign.

9. Several of whom we read in Scripture have a special mark of infamy against their names. 2 Chron. xxviii. 22 has such a mark against Ahaz. This king, whose audacity in wickedness is quite astonishing, was the father of the gentle, pious Hezekiah.

10. Hezekiah was the father of wicked Manasseh, who set up idols and altars in the courts of the Temple, even in the Temple itself; and committed many other crimes. True, he humbled himself, and sought and found pardon; but though he took away the idols and the altars, he could not bring back the souls ruined through his example and his sins. Moreover, his son Amon imitated him in his idolatry, but not in his repentance; he 'trespassed more and more,' and died in his sins (2 Chron. xxxiii. 23-4). Most remarkable is it that this wicked young king Amon was the father of Josiah, who served God from his earliest years. Most likely both he and Hezekiah had praying mothers; and a mother's earnest constant prayers are *prevailing* prayers. There is, doubtless, significance in the often-repeated words, 'And his mother's name was ——.' To *us* they are *only* names, but their works followed them and their sons, for good or ill.

11. Jechoniah and his brethren mean the grandson and the sons of Josiah, who reigned in succession; 'carried away' was the expression used for 'captivity,' a word avoided by the Jews as too painful. The long-suffering of God had waited all these years ere fulfilling the prediction (Isa. xxxix. 6, 7) uttered 120 years before.

13-15. These names are not found in the Old Testament, but were doubtless taken from accurate registers.

16. Christ's legal descent from David was never questioned. Christ is the Greek word for 'Anointed'; Messiah, the Hebrew.

17. Forty-two generations, passing one by one into Eternity, as *we* too are passing. Zechariah i. 5 asks a solemn question, 'Your fathers, where are they?' A hundred years hence how few will know that *we* ever lived! Yet numbers who never heard of us at all, may long after then be the better or the worse for our having lived. To ourselves every day of this fleeting life is of infinite importance, for the unending future hangs upon its issues.

18. Espousals or betrothal among the Jews meant, in law,

marriage; only, as in this instance, the wife might remain with her own friends awhile. This text is one of many which prove the distinct and personal existence of the Holy Spirit, as separate from the Father and the Son. Name other Scripture proofs.

19. Being by Jewish law her husband, he could not give her up without a writing of divorcement.

20. 'He thought on these things:' he would do nothing rashly.

21. Jesus, a Saviour, sweetest of all names for sin-burdened souls. Ask yourselves this question, 'Am I sin-burdened?' If so, the Name of Jesus will be as music in your ears, the Name 'above every name that is named,' etc. (Eph. i. 21). He, He only, and none other, 'shall save His people from their sins;' and one day present them faultless, 'before the presence of His glory' (Jude 24), without 'spot or wrinkle or any such thing' (Eph. v. 27). We are ready to ask, Shall we recognise ourselves when we are sinless? Yes, we shall, or we could never understand from what He saved us.

22, 23. See Isaiah vii. 14, 'God with us,' or God in our nature.

24, 25. Joseph lost no time in obeying the angel; Christ was born, not under his roof, but under his fostering care; and the Son of God submitted to be thought the son of the carpenter (Matt. xiii. 55).

CHAPTER II.

1. JESUS was born six miles from Jerusalem, where He died. 'Bethlehem of Judæa,' so called to distinguish it from Bethlehem near the sea of Galilee. It is also called Ephrath (Gen. xxxv. 19). What happened there? See both names, Micah v. 2. Nothing definite is known of the Magi, or wise men; perhaps they had heard some tradition of Balaam's prophecy (Num. xxiv. 17), or that of Daniel ix. 24. The journey would occupy four months each way.

2. Evidently they knew *something* of Him whom they sought;

they did not blindly follow the star, not knowing *why*. 'King of the Jews,' this shows they were not Jews. Suetonius and Tacitus, Roman historians, speak of a general impression in the East that the Sovereign of the world would arise in Judaea. The Jews, too, were anxiously looking for the Messiah. By computing the time mentioned by Daniel ix. 25-7, 'seventy weeks' are 490 years divided into three periods; seven weeks for the restoration of Jerusalem after the captivity; sixty-two weeks from the completed restoration to John Baptist's announcement of the Messiah; one week from that time to the crucifixion. 'His star' probably moved in the middle region of the air; they saw it in the west guiding them towards Jerusalem. Those who seek Jesus will never fail to be guided to Him.

3. Herod the Great, son of Antipater—his wicked life was within a year of closing. As a temporal ruler Herod need not have feared the Infant King, though his guilty soul might well have quailed before the coming of the 'Righteous One.' Where is that name given to Christ? (Acts vii. 52.) Jerusalem was troubled, and with good cause, not knowing what the cruel tyrant might do.

4. He convened the Sanhedrim, consisting of seventy-one persons.

5, 6. They directed Herod to Christ, but never moved towards Him.

7. He allowed a margin of two years.

8. Vile hypocrite! Well described in Psalm lv. 21. Little thought he that the King, Whose Son he purposed slaying, was listening, and that He reads the unspoken, unwritten thought. Men sometimes say or fancy that they can do this, can 'read between the lines'; but to Him all unuttered thoughts lie naked and open.

9. Evidently for a time they had lost the star; they may have come to Jerusalem on their own judgment, thinking that the birth of the King of the Jews must have been well known in His own capital; a thought alike natural and mistaken. Certainly the star would not rest over Jerusalem, since He was

not there. Their going thither led to the terrible slaughter of the babes of Bethlehem—we never know the issues of any act, of any word. As soon as they departed, the star re-appeared.

10. Great was the joy with which they hailed its appearance; and greater still the delight with which they saw it rest over the Saviour's home. Ah! there is no joy upon earth to be compared with that of finding Jesus! and there can be no bliss more exquisite in heaven than the first sight of 'the Christ in His Divine,' welcoming us with the deep, pain-taught tenderness of unspeakable love, the love of Him Who, amidst heaven's glories, can never forget what our ransom cost Him. Oh! to be with Him there!

11. Not in the least discouraged by the lowly home which sheltered Him, they fall down and 'worship.' This word means religious adoration, not any earthly homage. The same word is used when St. John fell at the angel's feet (Rev. xix. 10), and was imperatively forbidden. Doddridge says, 'How providential these costly gifts must have been to Joseph and Mary, about to take a long journey, and to sojourn in a strange land!' Evidently they deemed Him a royal child; but not of earth's royalty.

12. The crafty Herod was not to beguile these devout men into betraying Christ. God took care of that.

13. The Joseph of the New Testament, like the Joseph of the Old Testament, seems specially favoured with Divine dreams. Mention them. No wonder, indeed, that the Infant Saviour's reputed father should be thus instructed: 'the young child and His mother' showing that he was only the guardian of the Holy Babe.

The long wanderings of the Israelites in the wilderness make it difficult to realise that the river Sihor, the boundary between Judæa and Egypt, was only sixty or seventy miles from Bethlehem. Sihor, or the River of Egypt, is mentioned Joshua xiii. 3; Jer. ii. 18.

14. On rising from sleep he immediately prepared to obey, that very night.

15. About a year later, Herod died of a horrible disease. 'Out of Egypt,' etc. (Hosea xi. 1). 'Israel' in this verse stands as a type of Christ; this appears from Exod. ii. 22. Of all the many types of Christ that are scattered broadcast through the Old Testament, this was surely the most imperfect and faulty one; if indeed it be a type at all.

16. Picture the sorrow in the homes of Bethlehem, when the dearly cherished babes were torn from the mothers' clinging arms. The vile king took a wide sweep of time to be certain, as he thought, of killing Christ; like a reaper who would ruthlessly sacrifice a whole sheaf of corn for the sake of one ear, which he wished to pluck out.

Unconscious martyrs for Christ! surely amid the countless babes in God's Paradise these had their own special welcome there, and have their special place for ever. It is *well worth while* to suffer for Christ, in whatever way it may be our lot to do so.

'Oh! joy for Rachel's broken heart,
She and her babes shall meet no more to part.'

Some of these bereaved mothers may have lived to know and learn of Him for Whom their babes were slain, and to be deeply thankful that 'the Holy Child Jesus' was divinely guarded when the voice of joy was hushed in their own homes. Bethlehem Ephratah had been the scene of bitter weeping 1,730 years before, when the beloved Rachel, the most idolised wife of whom we read in Scripture, was left behind there in her quiet grave. Perhaps Jacob might have had her all his life had she been less perilously dear. It is as true now as ever, 'the idols He shall utterly abolish' (Isa. ii. 18).

17, 18. This prophecy (Jer. xxxi. 15) refers to the Babylonish captivity; but Rachel, there represented as mourning her exiled children, is here depicted weeping for the slaughtered babes. Notice the pathetic accumulation of sorrowful words.

19, 20. 'They are dead.' Herod and his cruel, wicked son, Antipater, died within a week of each other.

21, 22. On returning into the land of Israel, the tidings that

another vile son of Herod was reigning in Judæa gave just alarm to Joseph, the earthly guardian of the most precious trust ever committed to mortal man; he turned aside by Divine guidance into Galilee. Peræa and Galilee formed the tetrarchy which fell to Antipas, a younger son of Herod. Another Antipas is mentioned in the New Testament. What do we read of him? (Rev. ii. 13.) At the great roll-call on the day of judgment, how gladly would the royal Antipas answer to the martyr's name! The reign of Archelaus lasted nine years.

23. Nazareth, a small town in Lower Galilee, about half-way between the Sea of Galilee and the Mediterranean. 'A Nazarene'—no one prophet used these words, but the general prophetic testimony was that he should be lowly, despised, rejected. Nazarenes were held contemptible.

CHAPTER III.

1. FOR the exact date see Luke iii. 1. The wilderness of Judæa was the desert valley of the Jordan, a little north of Jerusalem. We should have expected John to proclaim his message in the streets of large towns; but God's ways are not ours. He moved the hearts of multitudes to go into the desert to John, and we value teaching most when we have been at some pains to obtain it.

2. What is repentance? Is it needed continually, or once only? Alas! we have daily, hourly to come humbly to our Father, saying, 'I have sinned' not in word or deed, perhaps, but in the hard proud thought, the cold wounding look, the countless omissions of some good that might have been done, some word in season that we might have spoken. Do *I* repent? 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.' Sublime thought! Lord, hasten the time.

3. This prophecy is quoted in all the Gospels. Christ, like the great ones of the earth, was to have His approach announced; but no forerunner will proclaim His second advent;

yet there will be 'signs' for those who can read them. See Matt. xxiv.

4. 'A leathern girdle,' so Elijah (2 Kings i. 8). The locust was permitted food (Lev. xi. 22). The Arabs and Hottentots think locusts a delicacy.

5, 6. A token of their felt need of redemption, and their expectation of a Deliverer. The Jews, it seems, baptized proselytes, but this was the baptism of Jews. 'Confessing their sins.' Mention promises to those who confess and forsake sin.

7. 'Vipers.' This implies the deadly malignity of both sects. The fatal bite of the viper is shown (Acts xxviii. 3-6) where Paul was considered a god because it had not slain him. 'Warned you,' *i.e.* what brought *you* here?

8. What fruits are here referred to? See Gal. v. 22, 23.

9. The stones of the clay hills around, to which John pointed.

10. 'The axe laid unto the root,' means 'cut the tree down,' not merely lop redundant or barren branches. The line of David never could be rooted out till Messiah came. The axe is laid to the root of each one of us, ready to strike, perhaps suddenly, when our time comes.

11, 12. I baptize you with the symbol, He with the reality. The sandalled shoes were borne about by the humblest servants. Humility is a striking characteristic of John Baptist; a lovely trait that we should hardly have expected in the stern dweller in the lonely desert, the bold rebuker of Herod Antipas. Fire is generally the emblem of utter destruction, but not so here, where it typifies cleansing from dross (see Acts ii. 3). The cloven tongues were the visible symbol of the Holy Spirit. 'Whose fan,' etc. Here we have Christ winnowing, separating the chaff from the wheat. He will 'thoroughly cleanse' it, not a grain lost amidst the chaff—not a particle of chaff gathered into the garner. '*His* wheat,' blessed pronouns of Scripture; the 'chaff,' empty professors; the 'garner,' heaven.

13. He came from Galilee, from His privacy at Nazareth, after a seclusion of eighteen years, during which we hear nothing of Him. It is plain that He wrought no miracles during that time, the miracle at Cana being called 'this *beginning*,' etc. (John ii. 11). There can be no doubt that, subject to His parents, He toiled patiently at the carpenter's bench, or that it was really toil to Him, and that the humble work was done as perfectly as though He had come for no higher work. Some day in heaven these wide gaps in our knowledge of His earthly history will be filled up; perhaps we shall hear *her* speak of them, who passed these silent blessed years at His side. How she must have marvelled that her wondrous Son remained so long in obscurity! Well may God's human instruments need long preparation for their work. What a lesson to check our impatience to do 'some great thing,' to enter early on some prominent work!

14. John evidently regarded Jesus as needing no purification. Shall the master come to the servant, the Saviour to a sinner? The holiest men are ever the humblest.

15. Even then the Baptist only *submitted* to the high honour conferred upon him.

16. This miraculous descent of the Holy Spirit is recorded by all the Evangelists. The dove is the emblem of meekness — 'harmless as doves,' it is also the emblem of purity. See Psa. lxxviii. 13.

17. This 'voice out of the heavens' is recorded by three of the sacred writers. We have here in the baptism of Christ the three Persons of the blessed Trinity, into Whose Name we are baptized.

CHAPTER IV.

1. 'THEN,' etc., *i.e.*, just after His glorious recognition by the Father. So is it often in life; strong consolation prepares us to meet sharp trial. Christ was 'led up of the Spirit into the wilderness,' or, as Mark says, 'driven'; He did not voluntarily

seek temptation. Wicked Balaam, and David on his palace-roof when he should have been besieging Rabbah, were far out of the duty-path—no wonder that one found death, and the other far worse than death.

2. Luke tells us that He was 'forty days tempted of the devil.' Probably these were inward temptations, subtle whisperings, but no actual voice, till the forty days were ended. Then, when the pangs of hunger were keenest, and the exhaustion greatest, came Satan in visible form to do the very utmost that 'archangel ruined' could.

3. 'If Thou art,' etc. Satan must have witnessed His baptism, and heard the 'voice from heaven.' What! the Son of God, and left forty days without food! Impossible! Yet, whilst reasoning thus, none knew better than Satan that Christ is the Son of God. Well had he known Him once, in the unforgotten glory of the Father's House.

Observe the gradation of the temptations: the first act to which he urged Him was not sinful in *itself*; there could be no more sin in turning stones into bread than in turning water into wine. The sin lay in the implied distrust in God's Providence. The second temptation was to an act of presumptuous rashness; though Christ, being God as well as man, would certainly have come forth scatheless from far greater peril in His allotted duty-path; but *this* lay directly out of it. The third temptation was to an act of unutterable sin and shame. If Satan could be so daring with the Holy Son of God, what would become of *us* in the dark, dreary time of temptation, if left to ourselves? 'In the hour of temptation, good Lord deliver us.'

4. Christ's answer shows that it is not the power of the Son of God that is in question, but the duty of man under want (Deut. viii. 3). For forty years the Israelites hung on God's bare word. *How* can man live by *every* word of God?

5. Probably Herod's royal portico, an immense tower on the very edge of the ravine of Kedron. Josephus says it was impossible to see the bottom of the ravine from the dizzy

height ; the attempt caused the head to swim. Its remains have been recently discovered.

6. This temptation seems to correspond with the third inducement to eat the forbidden fruit. 'Ye shall be as gods.' Imagine Satan a student of the Bible ! Yet such he must be from his power of suggesting to our mind texts to alarm when we need comfort, or to soothe when we need rousing from false security. Bishop Hall says, 'What is this that I see ? Satan himself with a Bible under his arm, and a text in his mouth !' Having been repelled by God's Word, he now uses it, but purposely omits the most important clause (Psa. xci. 11). It would have been far out of Christ's way to risk before the time the life on which earth hung. Had Daniel walked into the lions' den of his own accord, he would have left his guardian angel at the mouth of it ; and had the three noble Jews entered the fiery furnace unbidden, no Divine Form would have stood beside them to make the fierce flame as soft as summer air.

7. 'Why put this promise to the proof ?' To create a danger is to tempt God. Scripture is to be explained by Scripture, not set against it. Nothing is easier than to find texts that apparently clash ; but all that is needed is a fuller knowledge of their real meaning ; then there is no difficulty at all. There is an instance of this in Prov. xxvi. Verse 4 means, answer not a fool in a spirit or manner like his own, lest you resemble him. Verse 5 means, answer him as his folly requires, lest he be puffed up and mistake his foolishness for wisdom.

8. This was much more than merely natural vision. St. Luke adds that it was done 'in a moment of time.' Satan was permitted to put forth his utmost power ; and who can tell where its limit is, except the supreme will of Him Who alone can say, 'Thus far shalt thou go, and no further.' None of us can form an idea of the awful power of Satan. The Holy Land is, as it were, a common centre to Europe, Asia, and Africa, so that the spot selected was well suited to his purpose.

9. On what did Satan ground his claim to the world ? Where is he called 'the prince of this world ?' See John xiv. 30. Where 'the god of this world ?' 2 Cor. iv. 4. Observe the presumption of his offer to bestow His own on the King's Son, and on a condition so vile ! It is not sin to have a base thought injected into our minds : it is a sting, a stab ; but it is only *our* thought if we harbour it. Perhaps this hateful temptation was permitted partly that we may clearly understand this.

10. Now Christ names him, and sternly bids him go. This proves Matthew's order of time to be the right one. Is it asked, Why did He not dismiss him before ? Doubtless because He would show us how to meet temptation. See Heb. ii. 17, 18.

11. 'Leaveth Him' ; but, as Luke says, it was 'only for a season.' Ah ! again and again He 'suffered being tempted,' just as we shall do to life's last sigh.

How deep a joy for the angels to minister to Him, it may be with the food of heaven ! Perhaps the flashing of their swords had all the time kept off the wild beasts, mentioned Mark i. 13 ; but they are only now permitted to approach the Saviour Himself. *We* too are alone in our soul-conflicts ; only One can come near enough to help, or even to understand our need.

There is an interval of time between verses 11 and 12. St. John relates the last recorded teachings of the Baptist, the miracle in Cana of Galilee, the first cleansing of the Temple, the visit of Nicodemus, Christ's stay at Sychar, and His healing the nobleman's son ; all occurring during the intervening period.

12. This verse simply alludes to John's imprisonment in the castle of Machærus, on the eastern shore of the Dead Sea. We are told in Matt. xiv. why and by whom he was imprisoned, and how he was released by death. With the setting of the lesser light the true Light fully dawned ; as the morning star fades at sunrise. In almost his last recorded words to his

followers, John had rejoicingly said, 'He must increase, but I must decrease' (John iii. 30). Few things are harder to us than to rejoice at our own decreasing. God buries His workers, but carries on His work. In this instance Christ Himself took it up.

13. Honoured sea of Galilee, whose waters Christ so often crossed, whose shores were trodden by His sacred feet after, as well as before, they bore the nail-prints; and on whose coast He dwelt so much that Capernaum, on its north-western edge, was called 'His own city' (Matt. ix. 1).

14, 15. See Isaiah ix. 2. Naphtali was Jacob's sixth son, by Bilhah; Zebulon his tenth son, by Leah. 'Galilee of the Gentiles' means a district largely peopled by Gentiles, especially Phœnicians.

16. Well may it be said they 'saw a great light,' when He, the uncreated Light, dwelt among them; yet how little they appreciated Him!

'I am this dark world's Light.'—BONAR.

17. It is remarkable that Christ takes the very text of the Baptist, in his exact words (Matt. iii. 2). What wisdom He showed in beginning His higher teaching at the very point for which John's had prepared men's minds!

18. This was not their first meeting (see John i. 40-2), but from this time they 'followed Him.' He found them, as life's best blessings find *us*, in the duty-path, at our own proper work.

19. How different the employment! Before this their net drew the living inhabitants of the sea to death; now they were to draw the spiritually dead to Him Who is the Life.

20-2. They followed without question, without delay, without even asking, 'Lord, whither goest Thou?' Simple following is our true wisdom, happiness, and safety still. Am *I* following Jesus? Observe they 'straightway' obeyed. Yes, it must be *now* or not at all. Mark says they left their father in the boat, 'with the hired servants,' showing that they were

well off. What a noble career began with this prompt obedience !

23. This verse seems a summary of Christ's first circuit of Galilee.

24. The countries included in Syria varied much at different periods, in the same way that a map of Europe, dating a hundred years back, would differ much from our maps. In our Saviour's time, Syria probably included the country lying between the Euphrates on the east and the Mediterranean on the west ; and between Mount Taurus on the north, and Arabia on the south ; but it more properly referred to the region north-east of Palestine. In the pitiable catalogue of human woes in this verse we have four distinct classes : the chronic helplessness of the paralyzed, the keen suffering of those under acute disease ; worse far than this was lunacy, and worst of all was 'possession.' Yet it mattered not to the Great Healer what the disease or the affliction might be ; they were brought to Him in their utter misery, and He healed them all. So is it still as regards our sins—let the very worst transgressor bring his sins to the Divine Saviour, and cry to Him for pardon, and Christ will heal him.

25. 'Decapolis,' ten cities, mostly east of Jordan.

CHAPTER V.

THIS is not the same sermon as that in Luke vi., which is very much shorter, contains 'woes' as well as beatitudes, and was delivered after the choosing of the twelve Apostles. There are many resemblances between the two sermons, but there are also differences.

1. 'Sat,' the teacher's posture.

2. The multitudes addressed were those who had flocked to Him for the healing of their sick.

There are eight beatitudes, properly so-called ; those in verses 11, 12 are supplemental, to prepare us for what will follow in this wicked world if we possess the first eight. Some

commentators count them as seven, making verses 10 to 12 supplemental.

3. To be poor in spirit does not mean to be spiritless—a spiritless Christian is a very poor specimen of one; his pilgrimage, like that of Bunyan's Mr. Despondency, will be a doleful journey to himself and a troublesome one to others. To be poor in spirit means to be humble, to be lowly in heart, to feel an utter dependence on strength beyond our own; to realise in our very heart that we have nothing to bring of our own to Jesus, nothing whatever to plead but His all-atoning sacrifice.

4. 'Mourn,' for sin especially; but, in a general sense, how many of us can say, 'It is good for me that I have been afflicted'? (Psa. cxix. 71.) There is seldom any depth of character in those who have never known heart-sorrow. Sorrow teaches many blessed lessons: sympathy, patience, trust; it draws us to a closer acquaintance with Him Who was emphatically 'a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief' (Isa. liii. 3). Our sorrows are for the most part transient; they come as an unwelcome, unbidden guest, who 'tarrieth but a night'; yet the good that they often do is lifelong. Say to yourselves when sorrow comes, 'What is God teaching me by this?' and ask Him to make it a blessing to you. Far better is it to find a thorn in our nest, than to fold our wings in sloth, and never soar upwards. Be of good cheer, whatever He may send you; if you are His children, you shall be comforted, partially here, wholly hereafter.

5. See Psa. xxxvii. 11. The meek take injuries gently; they would rather suffer a great wrong than *do* a small one; and they patiently submit in all things to God's will. They 'inherit the earth'; *i.e.*, even here they get more good from 'a dinner of herbs,' than others do from 'a stalled ox.' They have more real enjoyment of life.

6. 'Hunger.' How readily we recall times in our lives when we 'hungered' for something; perhaps for letters that no post ever brought us, or for some boon that only came when we had given up caring much about it. But can we recall times

when we have hungered for nearness to God ? *thirsted* for Him as David did in his better and happier days, which were spent, not on the throne, but in the wilderness ? (Psa. lxxiii. 1.) The human heart is a wonderful thing ; God made it, and *only* He can satisfy it. 'Filled' means to be so 'satisfied' as to desire nothing more (Psa. xvii. 15). Life has countless blessings, but not one of them, nor all heaped together, will fill the void in our hearts.

7. The merciful obtain mercy, usually from men, especially from God. Those who fail to show it will fail to receive it. See Matt. xviii. 28-34.

8. The impure cannot behold Him, till they stand awestruck and trembling before the great White Throne. Evidently Christ is here referring to one of the brightest joys of heaven, one of the great rewards set before us. We dwell on the delight of seeing those happy ones who formed part of our daily life, and who have gone from us into the higher, holier world ; and we do well ; for when the mother meets her child, and the child springs once more to her arms ; when friend and kindred, long parted, look into each other's remembered faces, what deep joy it will be ! Yet surely the most blessed sight by far, and probably the first that we shall behold, will be

'The Christ in His Divine.'

Perhaps we shall fall at His feet confessing our sins, and He will raise us with the nail-pierced hands, and say, 'They are blotted out for evermore.' *Then* shall we know, not *till* then, what it is to see God, for Christ is God.

9. 'Peacemakers.' Abram was a peacemaker (Gen. xiii. 7-9). There are many opportunities of peacemaking in this jarring world ; a word of kindly explanation, or courteous apology, is often all that is wanted ; and the nobler one is always the one to yield first. A cramped, selfish mind is slow to understand and conciliate, to forgive and forget ; it only sees the question on one side, and from one point of sight. To 'be called' means to *be* God's children.

10. Some apply this to themselves, who bring what they call 'persecution' on their own heads, not by their religion, but by the lack of it, shown by an overbearing manner or irritating temper, which makes them difficult to live with or to get on with; or it may be by some assumption that implies 'stand by thyself,' etc. (Isa. lxx. 5).

11. The words 'falsely, for My sake,' are the key to the whole.

12. Those who *thus* suffer are truly blessed; and great is their reward in that bright home which God's children are daily nearing, by faith and prayer, and by the ceaseless passing away of this mortal life.

13. Salt preserves from corruption. It was of old a token of friendship. It was more even than this (see Num. xviii. 19 and 2 Chron. xiii. 5). The penetrating power of salt denotes the Christian's silent influence on those around him, an influence more *felt* than heard of. We may say or do something that by God's blessing has a lifelong hold on another person, and yet be entirely unaware of it.

14. Light is one of our great earthly blessings; and when we speak of our departed friends who are gone home to God, we say, 'They are all gone into a world of light.' As 'salt' denotes the Christian's silent influence, so 'light' is the type of his outward influence on the world. What would the result be were these influences suddenly withdrawn? London is a city of sins and sorrows, of strange crimes and untold griefs; what would it be without its countless Bibles, its many believing workers for God, and their ceaseless prayers?

15. Every Christian is a light-bearer. Many carry only a tiny spark, and sometimes hide even that under a bushel—*i.e.*, their false shame, and the fear of seeming to parade it, cause them to cover it up. Do not do that; the tiniest spark may show us, or some one else, a precipice at our very feet. Go continually to the Fount of Light; ask Him to give you more, more, more. Some carry a brilliant steady light, that 'shineth more and more unto the perfect day' (Prov. iv. 18). Let it

be visible in small things : little trials, difficulties, disappointments, in life's minutest obligations ; God notes all.

16. Are *we* light-bearers ? If so, we must neither hide our light nor display it for our own glory, lest it should go out in darkness, and we be found after all to have 'no oil' in our vessels with our lamps. The great object of life must be to glorify God by our light-bearing, with every power that we possess. Other aims pall upon us, but *this never* ; other objects may fail us, disappoint us, wound us, but *this never*. Moreover, this blessed work of light-bearing may go with us to the very portals of our home. Just as the little child trying to listen at church, or at a Bible-class, and to be obedient and gentle, may carry a steady light, so the great-grandmother, who can scarcely rise unhelped from her seat, may be a light-bearer to the whole family, her peaceful loving face telling of God's faithfulness through a long life, and of her sure hope of soon reaching 'the haven where she would be.'

17. Christ came not to destroy the law, but to fulfil it. He was the only One Who ever strictly and perfectly obeyed it. He came to teach men how to obey it, in the spirit as well as in the letter. As regarded the prophets, He gave them a far higher claim to reverence than before, by being and doing and suffering just what they had foretold. Before He came, the Old Testament was like a treasure in a dim cave, which Christ's coming flooded with celestial light.

18. 'One jot, or one tittle,' means the smallest iota (see Luke xvi. 17). 'Till heaven and earth pass away,' is a strong expression denoting permanence ; for even when 'the earth shall be burned up,' and 'the heavens shall pass away with a great noise' (whatever those awful words may mean), 2 Peter iii. 10-13 tells us of 'new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.'

19. 'One of these least commandments.' The Pharisees probably divided the precepts of the law into lesser and greater, the violation of the former being only a trivial offence, as the Romanists now speak of venial and mortal sins. Christ's

words, however, give no sanction to this. He rather means that not one of God's laws must be broken in the smallest point or detail. 'Shall be called least' means, 'he shall not enter it at all' (Bloomfield). Daniel xii. 3 has a glorious promise for those who keep God's law and teach it (see Psa. xix. 11).

20. 'Exceed the righteousness,' etc., that is, be of different and higher quality. John had warned the Pharisees and Sadducees; Christ now warns the Pharisees and the scribes. The latter were a most wicked class in His time.

21. Christ's plan of teaching was to proceed from the known and believed to the unknown; to begin His higher teaching at some starting-point at which His hearers would agree with Him. 'The judgment,' in this verse, means an inferior court of twenty-three members, from which appeal might be made to the supreme court, called also the council, or the sanhedrim, consisting of seventy-one elders; this at least is the number usually reckoned.

22. There are two kinds of anger: righteous anger against sin, and anger which is mere temper and irritated selfishness. Give Scripture instances of both kinds of anger. The rest of this chapter teaches the spirituality of the law. 'Raca' means 'empty,' a term of contempt. What an example St. Michael sets us in not bringing a railing accusation against Satan himself, but saying, 'The Lord rebuke thee!' (Jude 9.)

23, 24. God will not accept the sacrifice of an unforgiving and unloving heart; therefore, if we have offended anyone, or feel sore because some one has wronged us, let us be reconciled at once; doubtless there have been faults on each side, and we may have been equally to blame.

25, 26. Jacob acted on this (Gen. xxxii. 3-5 and xxxiii. 11). So should we act in being the first to conciliate; and most of all should we humble ourselves before God and seek *His* pardon.

27, 28. This teaches us the spirituality of God's law, that it has a meaning far below the surface, far deeper than any

outward action ; so we may be breaking God's laws continually, even whilst most strictly observing them as far as men's eyes can see. *Psa. xix. 12* applies to every one of us.

29, 30. These words are equivalent to those in *Gal. v. 24*. Occasions of sin, at whatever cost, are to be sacrificed on pain of hell fire. Such words, from lips so gentle, bespeak an awful danger.

31, 32. The Jews still divorce their wives on the most trifling pretext. One of the old Rabbis even said, 'A man may put away his wife if he sees another that pleases him better.'

33. See the 39th Article.

34, 35. In a court of law Christ Himself did not refuse to take an oath (*Matt. xxvi. 63, 64*). The high-priest's words appear to have been the most solemn form of administering it. Heaven, God's throne ; earth, His footstool (*Isa. lxvi. 1*). How vast the difference ! Yet it is only a faint shadow of our littleness, His greatness.

36. To swear 'by the head of the emperor' was a common Roman oath, just as 'by the life of Pharaoh' was among the Egyptians.

37. The Quakers take this literally, and consider 'yea' and 'nay' right, and 'yes' and 'no' wrong. In these days of most unguarded speech, we have great need to remember that 'whatsoever is more than these' comes of the evil one, or evil comes of it. Strong expressions lose all meaning by being used on trifling occasions ; but though unmeaning, it is wrong to employ them, for they are untruthful when they go beyond the facts.

38. Some of the Mosaic customs were clearly meant for the uncivilized state in which men then were ; but it never could have been intended that the injured man should himself inflict a similar injury ; the offender was to suffer at the hands of justice.

39, 40. A slap on the face was regarded as an affront of the worst sort. As He spake these gentle words, there must have

risen before Him the scene in which *He* was to suffer more than this (Mark xiv. 65). How mercifully *we* are spared the foreknowledge of our own sorrows; and how largely must this knowledge have increased His, for He partook our nature in all points *except one*, and shrank from suffering just as we do. Of course, we must take both these verses in the spirit and not in the letter. We are not told that Christ Himself literally did this, and indeed it would only have provoked the savage smiters to fresh insults.

41. A Roman mile was derived from 'mille,' a thousand, as it consisted of a thousand paces, each *nearly* equal to five English feet.

42. This of course does *not* mean that we are either to give or lend unwisely. Money that we know will be due at a certain time to some one else is *not* ours, either to lend, give, or spend.

43. This was their own perverse inference from the command to love their neighbour (Lev. xix. 18). To avoid alliance with heathens was often enjoined, to hate them never. Yet Tacitus says, 'Unto all other nations they bear an implacable hatred.'

44. See how Christ's blessed example illustrates this.

45. What a motive to animate us! What an honour to be the children of such a Father! How wonderful is God's kindness to thankless men! Do *we* bless Him for what we call our 'common mercies': air, sleep, food, home, a thousand comforts, the love of friends and parents, the occupations and the joys that brighten life?

46, 47. Even the worst of sinners do that. What do ye more than they? To be neighbour-like is the world's standard; to be God-like, which is the true meaning of godly, is the Christian's.

48. 'Perfect.' See Col. iii. 14 and 2 Cor. xiii. 11. Our aim, our standard, should be the highest possible. We shall fall far short of it; but the arrow pointed skyward, though it never reaches it, flies far higher than if aimed at a shrub. Let it be our noble ambition in all things to please our Father.

CHAPTER VI.

1. WE now come from actions to motives, which God closely searches. How awful a disappointment awaits those who expect God's approval of actions marred by unworthy, selfish motives! 'No reward' is inscribed on all such deeds. How plainly this is taught in 1 Cor. xiii. 1-3.

2. Dr. Lightfoot says that the 'trumpet' here was probably the mouth of the chest in which the alms were dropped; and those who wished for display could make the money 'sound' as they threw it in. The chests stood in the synagogues or at street-corners. 'They have received their reward'; i.e., what they sought—human applause.

3. Let him give with 'singleness' (marginal note [Revised Version] Rom. xii. 8). 'Let not thy left hand know,' etc., was a proverbial expression. We should not let our thoughts dwell on good that we have done, but think what we can do *now* for God. 'Act in the living present.'

4. 'Thy Father which seeth in secret.' Prove this attribute of our Father. We see little of our own hearts, still less of another's, but God sees us through and through. No duplicity, no darkness, hides anything from *Him*. 'Recompense thee.' Here, in some good measure; fully 'in the resurrection of the just' (Luke xiv. 13, 14).

5. It was the good custom of the Jews to pray at certain hours (Daniel vi. 13); but it was the evil custom of the Pharisees to contrive to be in some street or public place at the hour of prayer, where their devotion would be seen by many. The Mahometans also pray at certain hours—suspend whatever they are doing at the moment.

6. So Elisha (2 Kings iv. 33), alone with the dead child, 'shut the door upon them twain'; not even the mother must join in that solemn prayer beside her dead. 'Thine inner chamber,' the most retired place we can find, shutting out the

world and worldly thoughts. He can enable us to feel all alone with Him, even though others are in the room. Try to be conscious, whilst on your knees, of no presence but His; realise that He listens whilst you speak to Him. 'Recompense thee'—His hand over thee, His blessing on thy work, His peace upon thy brow and in thy heart. God is infinitely *true* to us. We want more faith to rest upon His faithfulness. Has He ever failed you?

7. Repetitions are not forbidden. Christ Himself, in His hour of agony, thrice used the same words (Matt. xxvi. 39, 42-4); and sometimes in our sore need but one cry will come from the burdened heart over and over again. *Vain* repetitions are expressly named, as those of the Pharisees, who, like the prophets of Baal, and the poor Romanist telling his beads, and repeating so many Paters and Aves, expected to be heard for their much speaking. What is prayer? It is not *much* speaking, but *heart*-speaking. It is the pleading of the soul with God; our weak heart speaking to His infinite pity and love. His heart is the very throne of pity, and He hears our cry; amidst the ceaseless hallelujahs He hears the faintest breath of real prayer. How wonderful the thought!

8. This is no argument against asking Our Father, but an encouragement to pray more simply and trustfully.

9. 'After this manner,' etc. Luke says, 'When ye pray, say,' etc. Therefore this matchless prayer is at once a model and a form. Notice its unselfishness: '*Our* Father,' as '*our* daily bread,' etc. Notice also that He is '*Our Father*'; we might have been permitted only to address Him as our Maker, instead of '*Our Father which art in heaven.*' Some of us, when speaking of our earthly father, must say '*he was*'; but God is one Infinite *Now*, the same before all worlds, the same for ever. His children are never fatherless.

10. 'Kingdom'; it is twofold, the inner kingdom in which Christ rules as the Lord of our heart, and of our very being—the outer one, for which the time has not yet fully come, foretold (Rev. xi. 15). 'Thy will be done.' Words cannot be

more simple, yet to learn to say them is the lesson of one's whole life, taught us by every part of God's discipline. How is His will done in heaven? It is done perfectly. Ah! how unlike our poor service! We do it sometimes with hearts full of anguish. Christ Himself prayed, 'If it be possible, let this cup pass away from Me.' In heaven God's will is done, not only perfectly, but joyfully; 'not for a time, but for ever.'

11. We are always trying to see our way ahead; God is always recalling us to that which lies under our hand: daily duty, daily strength, daily provision. We, like the Israelites with the manna, *must* leave the morrow with God, to Whom it belongs.

12. As the debtor is in the hands of the creditor, so are we in His hands.

13. 'Deliver us from the evil one,' our enemy and God's.

14, 15. Our forgiveness of others does not *merit* His forgiveness of us; but to ask Him for what we refuse to bestow is not the way to obtain what we ourselves so greatly need, though it is not always a *felt* need.

16-18. See Isa. lviii. 3-12. Men's opinion is the hypocrite's God; but He despises the fasting that chiefly annoys others.

19. Riches are well called 'uncertain.' They are both perishable and precarious—precarious since they may be lost or stolen; perishable because, though neither lost nor stolen, the rust and moth may spoil them. He was a wise man who inscribed upon his house in Chester, 'God's providence is mine inheritance'; for more than two centuries those words, in which he 'being dead yet speaketh,' tell of faith 'more precious than gold that perisheth' (1 Peter i. 7).

20. Have *I* any treasure there?

21. This verse enables us to judge; for the converse is also true, that if our heart be in heaven, we *have* treasure there. Our first waking thoughts often tell us where our heart is. Mrs. Fry said, 'I believe that for many years my first waking thought has been, How may I best serve my Lord to-day?'

22, 23. Bishop Bloomfield says, 'As the natural eye, if

healthy, directs the movements of the body, so the mental eye directs the soul.' In crossing a plank over a stream, do not look down at the water below ; look to the other side. And so in life, do not look at its rushing tide, or you will sink as Peter did ; look beyond the river, over which all life is but a crossing, since as soon as we are born we begin to die.

24. 'Mammon' is a Syriac word signifying riches.

25. 'Be not anxious,' feel no cankering heart-dividing care. He Who gave life will surely give food to sustain it, and raiment to shelter the bodies that His own hand fashioned so wonderfully. Dainty fare and luxurious clothing are nowhere promised ; our Master had neither.

26. Psa. civ. 27, 28, teaches a similar lesson of God's thought for the animal creation. Christ several times illustrates this blessed truth of the minuteness of His care, by the sparrows, so valueless in men's eyes that five were 'sold for two farthings, yet not one of them is forgotten in the sight of God, and without Him not a sparrow falleth' ; for Matt. x. 29 tells us not one of them 'shall fall on the ground without your Father.' Oh ! loving, comforting words ! We who are made in God's image, and purchased by our Saviour's precious death, are therefore dearer to God than the whole animal creation, unless it is indeed nothing to us that He suffered.

27. 'Stature' sometimes means age ; if so, it signifies here that none can stretch out the allotted span of life. Those are striking words, 'The *measure* of my days' (Psa. xxxix. 4).

28. 'Consider' means observe thoughtfully. The Eastern lilies are of many kinds and wondrous beauty.

29. Solomon's glory and magnificence were very great, quite marvellous for the smallness of his kingdom ; yet 'he was not arrayed like one of these.' Josephus says that he usually wore white. Place under a microscope man's most finished work, and you see only defects ; place under it the tiniest particle of God's work, and you see undreamed-of beauty and perfection.

30. The dead lilies were used for fuel ; hence the argument, 'If God so clothe the grass of the field, that blooms to-day, and

is fuel for the oven to-morrow, shall He not much more clothe *you*, O ye of little faith ?

31. Prudent careful thought we *must* take, like the wise woman in Prov. xxxi. Every sensible upright man insures his life and makes his will, though neither may be carried into effect for many years to come, but we must take no harassing thought. If our peace is marred by it, it is wrong ; corroding care brings no return but sorrow.

32. The Gentiles, who know no Father. What would life be to us without our Father ? What if we had to live one week without Him, without prayer ?

33. 'First.' This is a momentous word. See Col. iii. 1, 2. 'Added unto you,' *given in*.

34. Life is ever changing. The purpose of to-day is often wholly set aside to-morrow, no longer feasible or desirable. Each day brings its own cares ; to anticipate is to double them, for we get the cares without the strength.

CHAPTER VII.

1. WE think too little of the sin of untender judgments of others, believing the worst, ascribing motives, etc. We should train conscience to judge *self*.

2. Another proverbial expression. The liberal are generally liberally dealt with ; the churl, churlishly ; the proud, the irritable, the selfish, provoke pride, anger, or selfishness wherever they go.

3-5. Seeing small faults in others, and overlooking sin in ourselves. Only he who is severe with himself is fit to reprove another.

6. This verse means, 'Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, lest they turn again and rend you ; neither cast ye your pearls before the swine, lest haply they trample them under their feet.' In other words, do not *force* religion on those who do not value it. What we *say* to them will have little influence ; what we *are* has far greater influence than we are

conscious of. What wonderful power over men's minds it gave Peter and John when even their enemies took 'knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus'! (Acts iv. 13.) The command, 'Give not that which is holy,' etc., is too often quoted in a self-righteous spirit by those whose secret feeling is, 'I am holier than thou.' Such persons think they were born for more exalted work than 'the silent, patient, unwearied fulfilling daily of self-denying duties.' They would talk with Pharisees in high places, but not with one poor sinner at Sychar, beside Jacob's well. Our Master did *all* the work that came to His hand. Life's great duties lie all around our wayside, in *little* acts and words.

7, 8. Prayer, our only help, is suggested here by the difficulty of the duties enjoined. 'Ask, seek, knock,' a climax, accompanied by a positive promise; only we sometimes receive something far better than we ask, find more than we seek; knock vainly at an earthly door, because the gate of Paradise is opening to receive us. Often we know not what we ask, but God knows that it would hurt us, and His love denies it. We crave some dear human love, and He fills us with the fulness of the Divine; or perhaps we ask for life, and He gives the life everlasting. Paul sought the removal of his 'thorn,' but God gave such abounding grace and comfort, that he says, 'Most gladly, therefore, will I rather glory in my infirmities' (2 Cor. xii. 9). Remember, too, that delays are not denials, and that He gives us good interest for our waiting-time.

9, 10. A stone to smite, a serpent to sting. Bread and meat were the common food in that part of Galilee.

11. 'Being evil,' one of the striking parentheses of Scripture. Bad as men are, the *father* is not extinguished. What a heart then must the Father of all fathers have towards His pleading children! Some of us do realise a little of our Saviour's love; the 'man of sorrows and acquainted with grief' comes nearer to us as One Who bore our nature. Very precious are such thoughts but we must dwell also on the Fatherhood of God, and on the promised Comforter. Be persuaded that God *is* your Father; *that* is the starting-point.

12. Incomparable summary of the law and the prophets !

13. The entrance to life is difficult ; to destruction, frightfully easy. The world, the flesh, and the devil combine to make it so.

14. It is too narrow to admit us with a single particle of fancied goodness ; it is not too narrow to admit us with a great burden of felt sin, if we are hastening, though with weary travel-worn feet, to lay that burden where Bunyan's happy pilgrim left his, at the foot of the cross.

15. 'False prophets' ; enumerate some of these. See 2 Cor. xi. 13. Balaam was a true prophet, but not a true *man*. Hypocrites have nothing of the sheep but its skin, 'ravening wolves' (Acts xx. 29).

16. We judge of a tree not by its foliage, but its fruits. 'Nothing but leaves' (Matt. xxi. 19). Do these solemn words apply to us ? What fruit are *our* lives yielding at this moment ? 'Even a child is known,' etc. (Prov. xx. 11). Temper, pride, idleness, selfishness, deceit, self-will, are fruits ; so are 'love, joy, peace,' etc. (Gal. v. 22, 23).

17, 18. Even a good tree needs much pruning ere it becomes fruitful. What pains our Father takes with us, often sending trial after trial in quick succession, to humble us, to prove us, to wean us from idols ! 'Who teacheth like Him ?' (Job xxxvi. 22.) Sometimes a gardener cuts a young tree almost through before it yields fruit ; so He has to touch us in the tenderest part ere He can reach the very core of our hearts. Not unfrequently a good stock is grafted on a wild one ; hence the prayer, '*Graft* in our hearts the love of Thy Name.' Seventh Sunday after Trinity.

19. By-and-by the unfruitful tree is 'hewn down' and 'destroyed' by a worse fate than Nebuchadnezzar's (Dan. iv. 23), for no root remains to spring up again : it cumbered the ground ; it is not wanted, not missed.

20. Never be satisfied with your religion till it beautifies you, till it leavens the whole of your character, till you feel it controlling your most secret thoughts and desires. Even then

do not be satisfied with yourselves, but ever crave for more, more, more.

21. No one merely *saying* 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter, etc. Christ must be the Lord of our hearts, our own dear Master *now*; the Master of our talents, our time, our lives, of all that we are, or have, or can do.

22. 'In that day,' all the more solemn for being unnamed. How much these professors seem to have to say in their own behalf! Like Balaam, Saul, and Caiaphas, they prophesied; like the 'strolling Jews, exorcists' (Acts xix. 13), they attempted miracles.

23. But Christ, speaking as Judge, says, 'I never knew you'; not merely 'I do not know you now, in your terror and dismay,' but 'I never *did* at any time.' It must be a moment of deep suspense when a prisoner, tried for his life, sees the jury returning, because life and character are at stake; but at *this* tribunal Eternity hangs upon the Judge's sentence. 'Depart!' Ah! He is now saying, 'Come!' and in His Name I bid you come to Him this very day. *Now* He will welcome you, will rejoice to see you turning to Him; *then* the 'despised and rejected' Saviour will be the Arbiter of the destinies of Eternity.

24, 25. That Rock is Christ. Amid rain from above, floods all around, winds sweeping across, the house falls not; it is built upon the rock. The storms of life come to all, driving some to despair, bringing others closer to their Refuge. Am *I* on the Rock?

26, 27. The house built on the sand of mere profession is sure to fall. Roberts says that 'Eastern houses, built of the best materials, and on deep but not rocky foundations, often fall before the rains and winds of a monsoon.'

28, 29. It is one thing to be astonished at Christ's doctrine, another thing to believe, love, and obey Him.

CHAPTER VIII.

1, 2. WE cannot realise how dreadful leprosy is in the East, and so common that lazar-houses have to be built expressly for those afflicted with this awful disease; the more awful because so contagious, that none who dwell with them must ever associate with other men any more. One such great lazar-house, of which full details have been published, is surrounded by fields which the lepers cultivate, the whole walled in, the gate never opened for egress. At this moment two heroic Moravian missionaries—God bless them!—are voluntarily dwelling there, waiting their turn to die, and meanwhile doing good work for their Master; and two others are quite ready to take their places when they can teach and preach no longer. Surely the love of Christ in the heart is a vital principle indeed, since it nerves men to forego every earthly tie and hope, knowing that any mail might summon them to work like this! Of all ‘the noble army of martyrs,’ these are among the noblest. What are *we* doing for our dear Lord? The leper in verse 2 was perfectly convinced of Christ’s power; he doubted His *will*. Mark i. 40 describes him as ‘beseeching Him, and kneeling down to Him.’ Luke v. 12 calls him ‘a man *full* of leprosy.’ Sin, like leprosy, is loathsome, spreading, incurable by man.

3. Christ, ‘moved with compassion’ (Mark i. 41), ‘touched him.’ No one else would, or durst, have done it; they would have shrunk from him.

Christ’s ‘*touch*’ is a lesson for us; we never shall do people any good while we shrink from them. ‘*I will*’—majestic answer! Sometimes Christ spoke to the disease, as when He ‘rebuked the fever’ (Luke iv. 39); sometimes He spoke to the sufferer, or to the silent dead.

4. See Levit. xiv. 2; also verse 10.

5, 6. The centurion was evidently a devout proselyte (Luke vii. 3-5); the petitioner this time is a master pleading

for a servant. Bishop Hall says, 'He is unworthy to be well served who will not sometimes wait upon his followers.' A want of love between mistress and servants is the great cause of household discomforts ; each side seeks her own. Mistresses should *care* more for their servants personally and individually, and expose them to no risks of body or soul ; it is not enough to be simply and strictly just to servants ; they need sympathy and kindness. A mistress should see if her servant looks ill or sad, and inquire into the cause, as gently and kindly as if she were her equal, which in God's sight she may be.

On their part, servants, who know far more of our troubles and difficulties than our nearest relatives do, should study their master's interest, not waste or spoil his goods, nor idle away the time for which he pays them ; but give that willing cheerful *heart-service* that brightens our happiest hours, and soothes in our very saddest.

7. This verse literally translated is, 'I, coming, will heal him ;' and this was exactly what happened.

8, 9. His argument is this, 'If my servants obey me, diseases will obey the Healer ; if I, who am myself under a superior, have yet such full command over my men that my mere word suffices, how much more *Thine !*'

10, 11. Jesus only marvelled at two things—faith and unbelief. There is no unbelief either in heaven or hell : it is found only on earth. Satan, who himself believes and trembles, can infuse a thousand doubts into our minds ; he utterly foils us in argument, but he 'trembles when he sees the weakest saint upon his knees.'

12. 'The children of the kingdom,' *i.e.* the Jews ; 'outer darkness,' the darkness outside the banqueting-house, lighted by God's smile ; 'weeping,' from anguish ; 'gnashing of teeth,' from despair. This is one of the few descriptions of hell.

13. Everything hinges on faith : the promises are just that to us which our faith makes them. If we hope for very little from our Father, He gives us little ; if we place a generous confidence

in Him, He rewards it a thousand-fold ; the measure of blessing is according to the measure of true faith.

14. Comparing this verse with chapter xvii. 24, it seems that at this time Peter lived at Capernaum, and Jesus lodged with him. Peter's wife (1 Cor. ix. 5). Mark i. 30 adds, 'straightway they tell Him of her.' Luke iv. 38 says, 'they besought Him for her.'

15. The miracle here was in the instantaneous cure. Usually fevers leave us weak, languid, half dead.

16. It was the Sabbath evening (see Mark i. 32); but the Jewish Sabbath ended at six, or sunset; hence no objections were raised.

17. The words in Isaiah liii. 4, 'griefs' and 'sorrows,' include afflictions bodily and mental. 'Himself took' them—exquisite words! the hungry heart fastens on them. See Isaiah lxiii. 9.

18. The other side of the Sea of Galilee.

19. The rash promise of an inconsiderate and precipitate disciple. Not one of the twelve really did this. To do it perfectly will be one of heaven's sweetest, holiest joys (Rev. xiv. 4). How exquisite are the words describing the children in their home!

' They follow their Shepherd with loving eyes,
Through the beautiful valleys of Paradise.'

20. Christ bids him count the cost. Knowest thou whither He may lead thee? No sheltered home, no downy pillow, not even a covert from the storm. From the time His ministry began, where do we once read of His 'going home'? His nearest approach to it was when He was a guest in the family of Bethany.

21. Luke ix. 59 tells us that this procrastinating disciple did not volunteer, but was called. His request seems both reasonable and touching, but doubtless Jesus saw that it was either now or never with him. Even filial duty must yield to Divine command. We do not know his after-history. The undying record gives but *one* event in many a life story.

22. Let the spiritually dead perform the last offices to departed friends—'Follow Me.'

23. Mark says, 'They take Him with them, even as He was, in the boat' (chap. iv. 36).

24. 'A great tempest.' See some minute but graphic details, Mark iv. 37. This lake of Gennesareth or Tiberias, called also the Sea of Galilee, lies in a deep depression, near mountain ranges. He was 'asleep.' It seems not unlikely that weak health was one of the trials of Christ's earthly life. Isaiah speaks of His visage being 'marred more than any man' (chap. lii. 14). At the well, when His disciples could go into the city to buy food, He, 'wearied with His journey,' was glad to rest. Now, too, so worn was He, that not even the tempest awoke Him. On the cross, when the thieves had to be put out of their misery, He was 'dead already' (John xix. 32, 33).

25. Imminent must have been the danger to alarm these practised fishermen. Yet it was only *seeming* risk; no boat with such a Freight could founder. How could they imagine it possible! They had some faith, or they would not have come to Him in their trouble; but they had no faith in a *sleeping* Saviour. How selfish the prayer with which they awake Him, 'Save, Lord; *we* perish'! He was not roused by the howling of the wind, the roar of the waves beating upon the ship; but prayer, even such a poor prayer as this, reaches His ear at once. Though we cannot see Him, so it is still; but faith only quiets fear in proportion to the strength and reality of our confidence in God. Mark says, '*Carest* Thou not that we perish?' Ah! He always cares, but we forget to look out for tokens of His care.

26. Mark gives the words in which He rebuked the sea, 'Peace, be still,' and then followed 'a great calm.' This was in itself a miracle, the sea being unquiet for days after a storm.

27. Well might they ask!

28. Gadara was the principal town in Peræa, Gergesa probably a smaller one in the same district. Here this unhappy 'dweller in the tombs' met Him.

29. 'Before the time,' probably the great day of final doom. See Rev. xx. 10. Now these evil spirits were the tormentors, but their own day of torment awaits them still. No chains could hold their victim ; none could still his cries.

30. The owners, if Jews, were carrying on an illicit trade ; if Gentiles, they were insulting the national religion. They were far more guilty than the paid keepers.

31. Not even the swine could be harmed without Christ's permission. Their object was not simply to do mischief, but to steel the inhabitants against Him by destroying their property. Mark and Luke say their name was Legion.

32, 33. On this occasion Christ hears the prayer of devils. See a similar instance in Job i. With what majestic brevity He speaks ! One word is all He deigns to utter. The destruction of the swine was a just punishment. The keepers of the herd might have been carried over the precipice by the violent rush of the possessed animals, but they all escaped unharmed. Meanwhile the man thus healed sat clothed and happy at Christ's feet, in his right mind.

34. Awestruck, the Gadarenes dared not order Him to depart, but they 'besought Him,' and He went. In no one instance did He tarry when entreated to go. Matthew's account ends here, but Mark's history of the miracle is much fuller (chap. v. 1-20). Notice the complicated misery he describes. The chief sufferer was one whom none 'could tame.' He knew no repose or rest ; 'night and day he was in the mountains,' uttering loud wailing cries, adding bodily to mental sufferings by 'cutting himself with stones.' But not even *his* misery was cureless, for he 'saw Jesus,' and 'ran and worshipped Him.' How natural the prayer that he might remain with his wondrous Benefactor ! but Christ had work for him in the ten-cities region Decapolis, and thither he went, a faithful preacher for Him Who gives 'to every man his work.' Thank God that it comes to us from *Him*, Whose servants we are pledged to be, till earthly service ends in heaven's own rest ! I often wondered that the many temporal

blessings that the Great Healer always brought did not outweigh the possible loss of some more swine ; but a remark made, many years ago, by a poor old man to whom I used to read, threw some light upon it. He had listened with great attention, and more than usual interest, to St. Mark's full details of this miracle ; but his disappointing comment, made with a serious shake of the head, was only this 'Ah ! it was a big loss to somebody !' No doubt the Gadarenes, eighteen centuries before, took just the same view.

CHAPTER IX.

1. His own city, Capernaum, where He chiefly dwelt during His ministry. See Matt. iv. 13. It was His frequent presence there that made Him speak of that city as 'exalted unto heaven' (Matt. xi. 23). We learn from Mark that on this occasion Christ preached indoors ; hence the necessity for uncovering the flat roof in order to let down the bed whereon the man sick of the palsy lay, after they had vainly tried to bring him in by the thronged doorway. See Mark ii. 4.

2. Glad blessed assurance ! Do *I* feel the burden of sin ? 'Tied and bound with the chain of our sins.' How every word in that sentence seems to *drag* ! Palsy is often caused by intemperance ; if it were so in this instance, the sin must be pardoned ere its consequences are removed. God's inward help generally precedes His outward and visible help. Therefore if you bring some trouble or difficulty to Jesus, and find that He answers your prayer by making you submissive to His will in the matter, look out hopefully for further help. Faith does not return home with empty hands. In this instance the faith of the sick man's friends conquered all difficulties.

3. 'Blasphemeth,' *i.e.* claims what belongs to God.

4. Observe Christ's omniscience ; their thoughts were unuttered, but what mattered that to Him, Who reads straight

down into the heart? What a day that will be in which the secrets of all hearts shall be made known! (Rom. ii. 16.)

5-7. As a proof of His power to forgive sin, He bids the man arise, take up his bed, and go to his house; and he showed by this act the completeness of the cure. How blessed the results of coming into contact with Christ!

8. They marvelled, not at forgiving power, but that God had given such power unto men, or rather to the Man Christ Jesus.

9. Matthew, also called Levi. Mention the previous history and occupation of other holy men of old. 'Follow Me.' This is conversion; conversion is *turning* from sin to God; it is the work of the Holy Spirit. Am *I* converted? How may we know? Mark ii. 14 mentions Alphæus, Matthew's father—a different Alphæus from the one named Mark iii. 18. As Christ found Matthew at the 'place of toll by the seaside,' it may have been the ferry-tax.

10. See the other Evangelists on this. Matthew does not tell us that it was a great feast in his own house. The Evangelist St. Luke tells us this (v. 29). The sacred writers never dwell on their own good deeds. The 'publicans and sinners' were invited, as belonging to Matthew's former class.

11. But there were unbidden spectators there: picture the proud Pharisees standing around, for they would have disdained to sit down at that table where the Master sat, surrounded by the despised publicans. Their seat was 'the seat of the scornful' (Psa. i. 1).

12. Christ here answers the Pharisees according to their folly: 'Ye deem yourself whole; therefore My business is not with you.'

13. 'Sacrifice' here means ceremonial observance. 'I came not,' etc. How many bruised hearts have these tender words healed! Never say, 'I am unfit, unworthy to come.' His invitation is to such, and to such only.

14. John's disciples held an intermediate place between Christ's disciples and the Pharisees; the latter fasted twice in

the week, besides at the stated seasons. John's followers did not steadily follow Christ, but came to Him occasionally.

15. The 'sons of the bridechamber'—*i.e.* the attendants of the bridegroom. Scripture is full of types taken from the conjugal tie. See Isa. liv. 5.

16, 17. Instances of incongruity—the fermentation of the new wine would burst the old leathern bottles. These three verses are to show the inappropriateness of fasting while Christ was with His disciples; there would be time enough for sorrow when He was taken from them.

18. For minuter details refer to Mark and Luke. She was his 'only daughter, about twelve years of age'; old enough to be a stay and help to her parents, yet young enough to be still the little cherished treasure of their aching hearts; an unfolding bud of promise. And now she lay 'a-dying,' as some day each of us will lie. Mark says she was 'at the point of death'; the agonized father spoke of her as 'even now dead,' and at that moment it was doubtless true, though the actual tidings had not arrived. Before this, Christ had raised the widow's son at Nain; but no one ever seems to have *asked* Him to raise the dead.

19. He does not keep the sorrowing father in suspense; He accompanied him at once. But his faith was to be sorely tried by a brief delay on the road; for there was a work of mercy to do ere He reached the ruler's house, and He paused to heal another suppliant, urgent as was the first call. How patiently He bore interruptions of all kinds, and at all seasons; yet how *we* chafe over them, as if our work, or ourselves, were too important to be disturbed! This is one of the *many* lessons taught by our One perfect Example. Oh! to tread in His footsteps, whithersoever they may lead us! Lord, help us, for we have no strength of our own. When anyone calls us to a self-denying duty, we should cheerfully say to ourselves, 'Shall I not attend to God's messenger?'

20, 21. Mark and Luke tell us how many 'physicians of no value' (as Job called his reproving friends, chap. xiii. 4) this

poor woman had consulted, and how much she had spent upon them. Mark adds how much she had suffered from them, all in vain. The three Evangelists tell us that she had suffered for twelve years. Those years that had comprised the life of Jairus' daughter had been very sad and sorrowful to this suffering woman ; and now health and income and hope had all failed. Just in her extremity she hears of Jesus, and creeps closely to Him, hoping to touch the border of His garment unobserved, and then to pass out of the crowd unseen. How strange to suppose that He could heal her unconsciously to Himself ! Yet her faith in His power was strong, like that of those who laid the sick where 'the shadow of Peter' passing by might fall upon them (Acts v. 15). Hers was the touch of faith, not mere contact.

22. Greater things than she sought were in store for her. Well did Christ know the timid trembling hand that touched Him ! He had had His eye upon her all these weary years. Why then did He ask the astonished crowd, 'Who touched Me ?' He meant to constrain her to come forward and tell Him 'all the truth,' that He might bid her 'Go in peace.' Meanwhile the ruler waits, in what an agony of suspense ! He will not leave Jesus for a moment. What a trial the delay at such a crisis ! He saw a messenger from his own house making his way towards him, and the words met his ear, 'Thy daughter is dead ; trouble not the Master.' But Jesus said, 'Fear not, only believe.' Heart-cheering words ! May He speak them to *our* hearts 'in all time of our tribulation,' and in the solemn 'hour of death,' when no voice but His can reach us. It is not our coming that troubles Him, but our staying away.

23. The minstrels and the crowd were making a noise ; strange contrast to the deep hush of death ! Eastern nations do not understand quiet sorrow ; not only do the women of the family sob and wail aloud, but hired mourners of both sexes are sent for to lament as wildly. 'Too late now,' the father must have thought ; 'oh ! if He had only been *in time* !'

Jesus never comes too late ; it is *we* who are too late in seeking Him. The miracle was far greater for the delay.

24. 'Sleepeth,' most exquisite simile ! None of us fear sleep ; we count it a friend, a blessing, and such it is. Death, 'sleep's twin brother,' is a friend, too, if we are *Christ's*. We sleep, and we awake each morning to take up the day's burden ; but when we wake from the calm deep slumber of the grave, there will be no burdens, no cares, no sin. 'I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with Thy likeness.' Mention other places in which death is called 'sleep,' and give Scripture examples of the death of *young* persons. No one ever seems to have died in Christ's presence, for the Prince of life came to conquer death. The scorn of the mourners proved that the child was indeed dead. Perhaps they might have been allowed to witness the miracle but for their derision.

25. In each instance of the kind Christ *spoke* to the dead. 'Young man, I say unto thee, arise ;' 'Lazarus, come forth.' O voice of majestic power ! On one occasion He touched the bier ; now He takes her hand, saying, 'Talitha cumi'—'Maid, arise' ; and she arose and walked, and He commanded that 'something should be given her to eat.' The parents were to sustain the life He had restored. The act of giving her food would calm them after the strain of suspense and anguish, and the overpowering unlooked-for joy.

27. These were not the only blind men who called Christ the Son of David, thus owning Him as the Messiah. To try their faith He at first took no notice ; but He *heard*, and they followed Him into the house. The blind seem to have recognised Him more clearly than the seeing.

28. 'Yea, Lord.' How simple the words, yet how much hinged upon them !

29. 'According to your faith be it done unto you.' Only according to our faith will He answer our prayers. Place your heart's full confidence in Him, *believe* His love, His willingness to help, and you will *prove* that He answers prayer. You have a generous Master ; trust Him generously.

30, 31. How blessed for these men that the first Face they looked upon was Christ's! Well might they publish it in all that land!

32. The dumbness was in this case caused by possession.

33, 34. So complete and lasting were Christ's cures, that His bitterest enemies durst not deny them; but they committed the greater sin of ascribing them to the power of Satan. We have in this chapter four miracles wrought in one day; the words, 'It was never so seen in Israel,' probably refer to them all.

35. 'Teaching, preaching, healing,' truly He 'went about doing good' (Acts x. 38).

36. The Good Shepherd was moved with compassion for the scattered sheep. In what points does He resemble a shepherd, and how do His people resemble sheep? We lose much by not trying to understand the similes of Scripture.

37. The labourers were few even for the Jewish field. How few for the wide field of the world!

38. The labourers are not only missionaries, and pastors, and teachers; He bids us all 'Go, work to-day' in His vineyard. Oh! do listen to His loving voice; do give your young bright years to Jesus!

CHAPTER X.

1. THEIR mission was one of mercy, not of destruction.

2. 'Apostles,' *i.e.* persons 'sent.' The number twelve often occurs in Scripture. Twelve spies were sent from the twelve tribes of Israel, the descendants of Jacob's twelve sons. The golden city is described as having 'twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels' (Rev. xxi. 12); and its wall has 'twelve foundations,' and on them the names 'of the twelve apostles of the Lamb' (verse 14). Matthew, Mark, and Luke all mention Simon first. Find the occasions on which Andrew is mentioned, and notice the great difference of character between the two brothers. James, the son of Zebedee, was James the

Greater; John, as the younger brother, is named after him. Well were these two surnamed 'Boanerges, the sons of thunder'!

3. Give some brief notices of Philip, and mention what you know of two other men of the same name in the New Testament. Bartholomew, or the son of Ptolemy, was probably Nathanael, for in each Gospel his name follows that of Philip, who found Nathanael, and brought him to Jesus (John i. 46). He is also named in John xxi. 2, as being with the Apostles. Thomas, the doubting and desponding; Matthew, who in his own Gospel only is styled 'the publican,' in the roll-call of apostolic names. James the Less, Lebbæus (the brother of James), better known to us as Jude, the writer of one of the most marvellous of the Epistles, which in twenty-five verses takes us back to the fall of the angels, the prophecy of Enoch, and the mysterious contention about the body of Moses between Michael the archangel and his great adversary.

4. Simon the Canaanite, so called to distinguish him from Peter. Judas Iscariot—*i.e.*, of Kerioth, a town in Judah. Judas is invariably named last, and branded as the traitor. In John xiv. 22 the other Judas is expressly described as 'not Iscariot.' Simon is also called the Zealot. Mark iii. 13 says, He called unto Him 'whom He Himself would.' Yet one of these was Judas!

5. They were sent two and two, for 'the mutual society, help, and comfort' that the one might have of the other. Until Christ's death the Gospel was to be preached to the Jews only. The Samaritans were descendants of the Babylonians, Cuthites, Avites, Hamathites, and Sepharvites, sent by Shalmaneser, king of Assyria, to possess the conquered cities of the ten tribes of Israel. See 2 Kings xvii. 3, 6, 24. They intermarried with the scattered remnant still left; hence the Samaritans boasted of their 'father Jacob' (John iv. 12).

6. 'Lost sheep,' indeed, turning from the Good Shepherd, deaf to His voice, the most loving voice that earth ever heard.

7. This was their special commission.

8. A command always implies a promise : 'freely,' etc., *i.e.* 'you received the miraculous gifts without money; therefore take none for using them.' This golden saying is like the other, recorded by Paul, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.' Such sayings are 'like apples of gold in pictures' (or settings) 'of silver' (Prov. xxv. 11).

9, 10. This was under a miraculous dispensation. When Christ sent them forth later on, He bade them take necessities. The wallet was a leathern bag or pouch; Mark says that they were to be 'shod with sandals' (chap. vi. 9). Shoes were much more delicately made than sandals. 'The labourer,' etc., another proverbial saying.

11-14. Going from house to house would interfere with their work. 'Let your peace,' etc., *i.e.* 'it shall come.'

15. More guilty because more enlightened.

16. Rom. xvi. 19. Neither would avail without the other; before both combined, even the wolves gave way.

17. See the fulfilment of this in the Acts.

18. Peter is said to have stood before Nero, John before Domitian, and others before Parthian, Scythian, and Indian kings.

19. How much premeditation this must have spared them !

20. Christ calls God '*your* Father,' '*My* Father,' but not '*Our* Father.' Why? The Holy Spirit would prompt, control, and guide their words.

21, 22. Whence this hatred? 'Endureth.' What is the meaning of 'endure'? 'To the end'—the end of life's difficult journey; the beginning of 'the life everlasting.'

23. Their duty was not to risk life if it could be avoided. Christ Himself acted upon this. 'Till the Son of man be come,' *i.e.* till His kingdom be established on the ruins of Jerusalem, and the old economy.

24, 25. *I.e.* the disciple cannot expect better treatment than his Master.

26. Nothing is really hidden. Time is a great revealer.

27, 28. What Christ taught them privately they were to

proclaim upon the house-tops, fearless of consequences. How awful the picture! body and soul destroyed, yet living, suffering eternally; indestructible, *although* destroyed.

29-31. How comforting to notice the minuteness of God's care, corresponding so perfectly to the minuteness of our need! Bring *every* thing to Him, no matter how insignificant. Far more than half our troubles would disappear altogether if we cast them simply on God.

32. There are many ways of confessing Christ. To do this *now* and *here* is comparatively easy; but it may not be so at some future time. 'Him will I confess,' *i.e.* I will claim him as Mine before My Father.

33. We may deny Him, not only in word or deed, but by a look, a smile, a gesture, that encourages those who trifle with sacred things, and quote texts to point a jest. Whether we deny or confess, Christ will repay it in kind.

34. Compare this with the angels' song at His birth. *Received*, He is 'our peace'; but the Jews as a nation rejected Him: to them, therefore, He brought no peace.

35, 36. So it often is still, and keenly do many feel it.

37. Christ, if not God, could not have claimed supreme affection.

38. 'Take.' This implies that it is ready, that we have not to *find* it. '*His*' cross—a selected one, specially adapted to him who bears it. Meekly borne, it *increasingly* adapts itself to the shoulders that carry it. Some have a hidden cross, and these are hardest to bear, for the concealment, if unavoidable, is an additional burden. The only real relief is found in bringing it to Jesus; 'go and tell' *Him*. Kneel before Him; the very tears and moans there poured forth are true prayer if the heart turns with its load to Him, the All-pitiful. Taking our cross and following Him, implies that it will not be too heavy for us to carry; it will not crush us; we shall not sink under it. Up, therefore, in His strength, and bear it bravely; lighten, if you can, another's cross; and one day He will say to you, 'It is enough; come up higher.'

39. Temporal life may be saved at the cost of eternal life.

40. Therefore those who reject His messengers reject Christ.

41. 'In the name of a prophet,' *i.e.* because he is one.

42. 'Little ones,' young disciples, or disciples little thought of. How many cups of cold water may we daily give : a loving smile, a grateful encouraging word, a little well-earned praise, a letter of sympathy, even a leaflet ! How acceptable any of these may prove, and what a privilege to be Christ's messenger of comfort to some one ! What is the 'reward' ? Ah ! I cannot tell you ; for it hath not 'entered into the heart of man' (1 Cor. ii. 9) ; but live for Christ, work for Him, lean upon Him, and it shall be yours for ever. Only eternity will reveal the good that one kind word may be the means of effecting. A poor starving creature, on her way to drown herself, met her clergyman, who, as he passed her, said in a cheery voice, 'Good-morning, Mary.' She thought, 'If he cares for me enough to speak to me so kindly by name, perhaps God cares too ; I had better not drown myself.' She went home, prayed earnestly ; and soon some unexpected help reached her, and from that time she learnt to know and love her Saviour.

CHAPTER XI.

2, 3. THE marvels wrought by Christ pierced even dungeon-walls. This question sounds strange from the lips of Christ's forerunner ; yet, setting aside the possibility that it was asked for the sake of the messengers, it may have been that his own faith was for the moment shaken, as that of the Apostles was later on. Perhaps to none would captivity seem more gloomy than to John the Baptist, after his life of freedom in the wilderness. He would hear that Christ raised the very dead. Why then should He not open prison-doors ? He might say, 'Master, carest Thou not that I, Thine own messenger, perish in this dungeon ?' Doubtless He would have released him ; but John had 'fulfilled his course,' his work was ended now, and he

was about to pass, by a swift, painless death, from the dungeon to the Palace. What better thing could life possibly have in store for him? The lonely prison hours, which were the very discipline he needed, were almost ended; one step more, and that a very short one, and he would be within 'the charmed circle of everlasting love.'

4, 5. The answer was a practical and immediate one. Luke vii. 21 says, 'in that hour,' etc.

6. How tender is this rebuke, how gently worded! to John's disciples it would not seem a rebuke at all; yet, doubtless, if his faith had wavered, he would understand it as such. Blessed is he who, whatever happens, is not 'stumbled'; does not cast away his confidence in God. We learn from Psalm lxxiii. that one of life's great problems has always been the suffering of God's children, as contrasted with the prosperity of the wicked. Numbers, like Job's friends, read the mystery wrongly; but even here light often falls upon it, and one day, in the full sunshine of God's smile, we shall understand it all.

7. Though not a ray of light was cast on John's own prospects, no sooner were his disciples gone, than Christ breaks forth into glorious commendation of him. 'A reed,' yielding to every gust like the reeds on the banks of the Jordan; not such was John.

8. 'Clothed in soft raiment,' a self-indulgent courtly preacher. How unlike the Baptist!

9, 10. There were many prophets; there was only one forerunner—he stood alone. What strong consolation would such praise from Christ's own lips have given to the lonely captive in the castle of Machærus, near the Dead Sea! but it was for some wise reason withheld.

11. None had risen higher in official dignity; 'the kingdom of heaven,' *i.e.* the new gospel kingdom which John announced, but was not *of*.

12. Be *earnest* in your religion; thoughtless indifference ruins more souls than infidelity. Life is a solemn reality, and after life comes death, and after death, the judgment. What must angels think of us if we do not care for our souls?

13. John came midway between the old and the new dispensation ; he stood as on a solitary platform, above the one, below the other. See Luke xvi. 16.

14. See Malachi iv. 5, 6.

15. A formula used to solicit attention to some important saying. See Rev. ii. 7. We must listen with a willing believing ear.

16, 17. The Jews were like wayward children ; they, the Pharisees especially, rejected John as an ascetic, and Christ as just the opposite.

18. John led an austere and mortified life, and they said he acted like a demoniac, driven into the wilderness. His followers had to seek him in the desert ; he did not seek *them*.

19. Christ, on the contrary, was found at their very door, associating familiarly with men in their daily life ; not only sharing their necessary meals, but present as an honoured Guest at their festivities. How happy is it for us that Christ, and not the Baptist, is our Example, and that He has taught us how to hallow life's daily course, and to make even our common work an act of service to Himself. 'Wisdom is justified,' etc., *i.e.* the children of Wisdom honour her by their lives.

20. 'Upbraid,' *i.e.* cover with shame. See Psa. cix. 29.

21. Chorazin and Bethsaida, like Capernaum, were on the borders of the Sea of Galilee.

22, 23. These three towns had more of Christ's ministry than any other places. Tyre and Sidon were ruined by commercial prosperity. Riches, ease, self-indulgence, forgetfulness of God, hardness of heart, these are often steps to ruin. In the wars between the Romans and the Jews, these three towns were utterly destroyed.

24. It will be more tolerable even for guilty Sodom, ruined by its sins, than for those who reject Christ.

25. This is the first occasion on which Christ addresses God as 'Father.' Mention other occasions. 'The wise,' *i.e.* those

who *think* themselves wise. Why are these Divine truths hidden from them, and yet revealed to babes ?

26. A sublime Amen to the foregoing. Bishop Bloomfield says : 'The full sense is, "Yea, [I do thank Thee] O Father, because it is Thy good pleasure that so [it should be]."'

27. No one really knows even his nearest friend, who has a thousand thoughts and feelings that, even if uttered, would be unintelligible perhaps. How then can we 'by searching find out God' ? (Job xi. 7.)

28. Ravishing words ! 'Labour, and are heavy laden'—misery both in its passive and active sense. Every human being carries a weight, a burden, from which there is no escape except by casting it on God. Sin, suffering, temptation, care for the future, bereavement, poverty, the heart-sickness of hope deferred or blighted, all these are burdens ; but whatever be our trouble, He can give rest. 'Rest,' how earnestly longed for by toiling men and women ! Mere bodily rest is very sweet to the weary, and mental rest from hard brain-work ; but what are these to the *heart-rest* that Christ gives ? Here all rest is brief and often broken ; the tired frame must resume its labour, the brain its toil ; and even the soul's rest is often interrupted through our frail hold on Christ. What would become of any of us but for His holding *us* ? Let us labour to enter into the 'rest' of heaven, that blessed place where the work will be so exactly that for which we are fitted, that we can never weary in it, never be tired any more at all.

29. 'My yoke,'—'learn of *Me*.' Note well the pronouns. Whose yoke am *I* wearing ?

30. Because it is a yoke of love, and a burden imposed by a loving Hand. What a strain of seraphic music echoes in these closing verses !

CHAPTER XII.

1. CHRIST and His disciples must have wanted food, as He defends them on the plea of necessity. Mention other instances

of His poverty. Rubbing the ears of corn was allowed (Deut. xxiii. 25).

2. The Pharisees reproached them, not for *taking* the corn, but for doing a kind of *work* on the Sabbath, by rubbing it. They should have blamed their own lack of hospitality.

3, 4. Works of necessity, piety, and mercy, are lawful on the Sabbath. Christ illustrates the plea of necessity by the example of David. If this plea justified David in one breach of ceremonial observance, how much more Christ in another ! See 1 Samuel xxi. 6.

5. See Numbers xxviii. 9, 10. 'Profane the Sabbath,' i.e. do extra servile work of various kinds, in offering additional sacrifices on that day ; but as it was a work of piety, they were blameless.

6. One greater than all outward sanctities is here.

7. Here Christ justifies the plea of mercy, and gently reminds them of their own want of kindness, which had necessitated such meagre fare. Not a voice said, 'Master, eat.' What a golden opportunity was lost for ever !

8. 'Lord of the Sabbath,' and therefore equal with Him Who appointed it. Do we *love* God's day ? Do our hearts yearn sometimes for that eternal rest of which it is the emblem ? Mark ii. 27 teaches us the value of the Sabbath to every part of our nature. Explain this.

9. His enemies watched Him, dogging His footsteps to find some charge. They were 'filled with madness' (Luke vi. 11)

10. His *right* hand, Luke tells us. How he must have hung on each word of the brief colloquy !

11, 12. See the fuller details in Mark iii. and Luke vi., from which, we learn that Christ, knowing their thoughts, bade the sufferer stand forth where all could see him. *Not* to save life is to kill. How irresistible therefore is the argument ; if mercy is to be shown to an animal, how much more to a man !

13. Mark tells us that 'He looked round about on them with anger,' holy anger ; and then the command came, 'Stretch forth thy hand,' and without even a *touch* from Christ,

the withered useless hand was restored. 'God's biddings are enablings.' Whatever it is your clear *duty* to do, that thing you *can* do.

14. The Pharisees went out and consulted with the Herodians (partizans of Herod) how they might destroy Jesus. His miracles had two results: they healed many, they hardened others.

15. He, knowing it, withdrew with His disciples to the Sea of Galilee, followed by great multitudes, numbers of whom were sufferers, and He 'healed them all.'

16-18. He often gave this charge. See Matt. viii. 4, and ix. 30. In Mark v. 19 just an opposite command is given. 'My servant.' What an honour to *us* to bear the same name that God gave to His Son! *Are* we His servants? Is our life-work a willing service to Him? If not, who is our master?

19. 'Not strive, nor cry aloud.' See Isa. liii. 7, and 1 Peter ii. 23. St. Paul's spirited defence of himself before his judges on different occasions does him honour; and so do the resolute words Acts xvi. 37: 'Nay verily; but let them come themselves,' etc. Yet, had Christ acted thus, we should have missed the wonderful example of the infinite patience and gentleness of the suffering Lamb of God.

20. 'A bruised reed.' A reed was the weakest and humblest of musical instruments; a *bruised* reed was utterly worthless; a touch would break it; but Christ's tender Hand will bind it up. Ah! there are many 'bruised reeds,' many who have had to lay down for ever life's dearest hope or treasure. Those we love best are taken first. Let us try to be comforters and helpers as long as we live. Sanctified sorrow is a great teacher. How?

21. We Gentiles, if indeed we trust in His Name, are a living proof of this. God's Name means *Himself*; to trust in Christ's Name therefore is to trust in *Him*. *Do* we trust in Him? not merely when things go well with us, but when all looks dark, and bewildering, so that our faith, if it is anything

at all, must be a real power, and one divinely given? We lose more than we know through the weakness of our faith. It was not till the feet of the priests that bare the ark were actually dipped in the brim of the water that Jordan rolled back (Joshua iii. 13-15).

22. The only instance of a blind demoniac.

23. So marvellous a cure made the common people wonder whether Christ were not the Son of David, *i.e.* the Messiah.

24. Baal-zebub, 2 Kings i. 2. Idolatry is too often devil-worship.

25. He knows *our* thoughts, yet loves us! 'Every city divided against itself,' etc. How awfully fulfilled in the siege of Jerusalem, by Titus, when the several factions raged against each other!

26. Christ here confirms the doctrine that there is a kingdom of darkness, and Satan its head.

27. Mark ix. 38 tells us of one who cast out devils in Christ's Name. Others tried it without success (Acts xix. 13-16). Bishop Bloomfield says the argument is this: 'If those who cast out demons prove themselves to be leagued with Satan, then must your disciples also be leagued with him.'

28. 'By the Spirit of God,' or, as Luke xi. 20 says, 'the finger of God.' The *finger* of God suffices to cast out devils. What must be the *right hand* of His power!

29. The 'strong man' is Satan; 'his house,' the sinner's heart. Christ comes, dislodges him, and occupies the heart, which in this parable is not left 'empty,' ready for the destroyer's return; for a stronger than he hath made it His dwelling-place.

30. There is no neutral place. 'Gathereth, scattereth,' refer probably to gleaners.

31, 32. We are not to understand that all sin will actually be pardoned, but that it can be pardoned to those who truly repent. Christ's glory was then veiled in the flesh, His work at that time incomplete; but after His ascension, and the coming of the Holy Spirit, unbelief would be wilful, and

therefore unpardonable, in those to whom these wondrous facts were known.

33. A new application of the former saying, Matt. vii. 16.

34. Of what is *my* heart full ?

35. How instructive is the marginal reading of Prov. iv. 23, 'Keep thy heart above all keeping' !

36. One of the most awful texts in God's book. Words of innocent cheerfulness, and lawful, kindly fun and merriment, are by no means idle words ; the mind *must* have recreation ; it is a necessity of our nature. Idle words are words that traduce the absent, or bring some shadow on the listener's face or heart, implant a sting, or leave a stain ; words of unkind though covert meaning, proud boastful words, or whispered jokes that cannot be uttered openly—all these and many more are idle words. We go away and forget what we have said, perhaps we could give no account of what has passed, but there is a record kept of it. God help us to guard our words, for they are the index of the heart, as the hands of a watch indicate its unseen action. See Psa. cxli. 3.

37. In the same way in which we say, 'The sun-dial makes it noon.' The position of the earth in reference to the sun *makes* it noon ; the dial *indicates* it. We are not justified by good words, for in Christ alone are we justified (see Isa. xlv. 25) ; but words indicate character, our standing before God, and our probable place in the great hereafter.

38. Luke xi. 16 says : 'a sign from heaven.' Much later on, Paul wrote, 'Jews ask for signs' (1 Cor. i. 22).

39, 40. This took place in the Mediterranean Sea, when Jonah, fleeing from Nineveh, was somewhere between Joppa and Tarshish. It is said that there is in that sea a fish of extraordinary size, called the lamia, from the dimensions of its throat. Jonah's punishment was a type of Christ's death : 1st, as God's awful judgment ; 2nd, as reversed in three days ; 3rd, as followed by a mission to the Gentiles. Mention another instance in which prayer and humiliation reversed a threatened judgment, and one in which no prayer availed (Isa. xxxviii. 9 ;

2 Sam. xii. ; see also 2 Cor. xii. 7-9). To which class does this prayer belong ?

41. Nineveh repented at the preaching of faulty Jonah ; the Jews rejected Christ Himself.

42. Sheba, a tract in Arabia, about as remote from Judæa as the north of Scotland is from the south of France ; a more formidable journey in those days than it would now be to travel round the world. The 'ends of the earth' was the usual phrase to denote a remote country. The Queen of Sheba came to hear the wise words of a mere man, but few cared to listen to the Son of God.

43-45. This is a twofold picture of the increasing depravity of the Jewish nation, and of the awful end of a backslider. 'Walking,' etc. ; Satan is thus represented Job i. 7, and 1 Peter v. 8. Old Latimer calls him the 'one bishop who never leaveth his diocese.' The key to the whole passage lies in the word 'empty.' There was no Christ enthroned in the guilty city, no Christ enthroned in the man's vacant heart ; consequently the last state of both was worse than the first. Relapse makes a man's condition more hopeless than ever. Every human heart is 'empty' till Christ dwells there ; there may be warm human love, but only the Divine love can ever fill it.

46, 47. As He spoke, His anxious friends, fearing He was 'beside Himself' (Mark iii. 21), on account of His abounding labours, came interrupting. See Mark iii. 31. Luke viii. 19-21 says: 'They could not come at Him for the crowd' ; therefore, 'standing without, they sent unto Him,' etc. These small undesigned coincidences of Scripture are full of interest. His 'brethren,' or kinsmen, were James (the Less), Josès, Simon, and Judas, or Jude (see Jude 1). We must expect to be misjudged, even by our nearest relatives.

48. He felt this an unseasonable interruption, nor was it the first time that His mother's anxious love had needed a gentle rebuke. *Which* was the first instance of this ?

49, 50. Notwithstanding the matchless honour vouchsafed to Mary, she was doubly blessed in 'rejoicing in God her Saviour' ;

i.e. there was no more salvation for *her* without Christ than for any of us. How sublime the lesson these words convey! Here are the members of a family surviving earth's easily-broken ties—ties that are very precious while they last, but very transitory if they are *only* of earth. How sad to think that loving families will be for ever parted, some on the right hand, some on the left 'in that day.' Pardoned David and his wicked sons; the devout youthful Abijah (1 Kings xiv. 13) and his ungodly family; penitent Manasseh and wicked Amon. *We* know not which of *us* will dwell together in God's Paradise, but we *do* know where our hearts and hopes are. Am *I* living for Christ? Will He lay His Hand on *me* when 'that day' comes, and call me His before His Father and the holy angels?

CHAPTER XIII.

1, 2. THE same day on which His long fasting and fatigue had disquieted His friends, He sat by the Sea of Galilee, perhaps seeking a little quiet and repose, soon interrupted. They who gathered round Him always found Him ready; and *He* is *so still*.

3. Parables seem to have had their origin with the Hebrews; the oldest parables we have recorded are found in the Scriptures. Mention some of the earliest. Parables are adapted to all classes, and understood according to their several capacities for spiritual knowledge. A child, for instance, reads the 'Pilgrim's Progress' as a story full of wonderful things; a deep thinker learns most from it. The first parable in this chapter is introductory to the other six, which are arranged in three pairs. In one sense we are all sowers, but what kind of seed are we sowing?

4. The wayside ground was too hard for the seed to enter; our hearts need the ploughshare of sorrow, and God would not use it so often, nor make its edge so keen, if a milder agent would do; for He has no pleasure in putting His children to pain.

5. Rocky ground, covered with a thin layer of earth, too thin for the seeds to take proper root ; they sprang up all too quickly, having so little soil to penetrate. The heart of man is hard and stony ; only God can soften it.

6. In Palestine, during the seed-time (in November), the sky is cloudy, and the seed, even in stony ground, soon springs up ; but, when the sun disperses the clouds, it outgrows its strength.

The Churches in Asia Minor seem to have had little endurance. See 2 Tim. i. 15 ; and the reproofs to most of the seven Churches, Rev. ii., iii. ; see also Paul's rebukes to the Galatians.

7. 'Thorns,' brambles, etc. These absorb the nourishment of the ground, and so *starve* the seed.

8. 'Good ground,' soft, deep, free from noxious weeds, moistened with the dew and rain, fertilized with God's sunshine. Strabo and Pliny say that the soil of Babylonia never produced less than 200 fold, and sometimes 300.

9. A special call on the attention of His hearers.

10. He had before spoken plainly, as in the Sermon on the Mount. He did not formally adopt this mode of teaching till the Pharisees had insulted Him, by saying that He worked miracles through the power of Satan.

11. 'Mysteries,' *i.e.* secrets. Parables at once reveal and conceal.

12. 'Whosoever hath,' *i.e.* understands and retains what he has. The Jews who had the Temple and the sacrifices, and yet rejected the One Sacrifice, were like those who know the words but not the meaning of a parable ; and now for eighteen centuries, even that they had has been taken away.

13. 'Seeing they see not,' though Light such as never shone before shines around them ; 'hearing, they hear not,' though 'never man so spake' (John vii. 46).

14, 15. See Isa. vi. 9, 10 ; also Rom. xi. 8. They saw the proofs of Christ's Messiahship, but would not receive them as proofs, even when He raised the very dead, and in one instance from the tomb itself.

16. Yes ; for they believed as well as saw ; laid to heart as well as heard.

17. What would Socrates have given to see and hear these things ! What would Job, Abraham, and David have given ! No heathen philosopher ever heard of a God of *Love*. Their anxious groping in the dark reached the great truths of the immortality of the soul, and the reunion of the just in some eternal Home, but of the glorious history and work of our Incarnate Saviour they never heard, though some of them would gladly have purchased such knowledge at the cost of half their remaining term of life. Is such knowledge *nothing* to us, who have it 'without money and without price' ? Or is it indeed our *life* ?

18. 'The sower,' Christ and His servants.

19. Those who hear with unprepared indifferent hearts ; nothing is more sad and more amazing than the small value that numbers set upon their souls. They care prudently and zealously for their temporal interests in every point ; but as regards religion, any time will do for that—a deathbed will be soon enough ! Indifference is as fatal to the soul as actual vice. As the careless worshipper leaves the church, Satan meets him at the very door ; perhaps fills him with comfortable satisfaction at his going there so regularly, even though the weather be unpropitious ; and so he passes through the gate of God's Acre, farther from God than when he entered it.

20. These hearers were not indifferent ; they received the word 'with joy,' but the result was speedy in proportion to its worthlessness. The Holy Spirit's work is often very gradual ; we only retard it by trying to hurry it.

21. 'No root,' except while prosperity lasts ; the first cold blast of adversity, the first 'tribulation,' 'stumbles' them, and their place knows them no more. Adversity is common to all, but its 'sweet uses' are known to those only in whom 'tribulation worketh patience,' and who, at each fresh stroke of the rod, cast themselves more and more closely on the tender, loving, pitying heart of God. How safely they may shelter

there in the wildest storm that ever raged ! Only *try* it ; but remember that it would be presumptuous to hope for such a Refuge then, unless He is the God of our prosperity as well as of our dire need, when all are ready enough to call upon Him.

22. 'Thorns,' heart-dividing cares, that crowd in upon us when at prayer, making a screen between us and our Father, Who would lighten them for us, if only cast in faith on Him. Undue worldly anxieties, love of money, pleasure, honours, are 'thorns.' They pre-occupy the mind, and we bring to God lip-service, instead of heart-service, because our *real selves* are busy with mental calculations, or plans, or ponderings. What awful mockery such prayer is ! God pardon us ; God help us ! Often the world and sloth leave no time for *morning* prayer ; and he who forgets *that* seldom finds leisure for it, in the weariness that is sure to follow a prayerless day, ere he lies down at night. Observe, the seed grows, but never ripens.

23. A tender heart, stirred to its depths by the Holy Spirit, and guarded from worldly encroachments (oh ! how they press upon us on every side !), brings forth fruit with patience ; *i.e.* 'patient continuance in well-doing' (Rom. ii. 7). Remember, God alone knows to which of these four classes we belong, and He *does* know, most surely. Do not be content, if you are His, with trying to do a little good in the world ; strive to bring forth *much* fruit, sixty, an hundred-fold, and Christ's 'well-done' will await you *yonder*.

24. This and the seventh parable represent the same thing, the present mixed state of the professing Church, and the grand final separation. This parable goes more into detail, dwells more on the aspect of things as we now see them ; the other in verse 47 refers chiefly to the ultimate and complete separation.

25. 'While men slept' the mischief was done (1 Pet. v. 8). Yet whilst this conveys a lesson, it does not imply blame ; sleep is God's mysterious and merciful gift, which comes we know not how, and carries us, or rather some part of us, we know not whither. The wise virgins, as well as the foolish ones, 'slumbered and slept,' but under very different circum-

stances. The word 'tares' means darnel, a noxious weed. The enemy having sown it, went his way quite easy about it ; his dark work takes time, but its results are sure.

26-28. And now the mingled seeds are springing up, and the surprised and disappointed servants come to their master for explanations, after which they propose to go and gather up the tares. They ask, 'Wilt thou that we go,' etc. ?

29. But the Master, wiser far than they, does *not* will it ; He understood their sorrowful amazement, He approved their zeal, but they little knew what delicate work they were planning, and how blindly they would do it, treading down precious wheat with every extirpated tare. He will endure ten thousand tares until the harvest, but not one blade of corn must die.

30. He comforts them with the assurance that, in the day of harvest, all will find their own appointed place.

31, 32. This parable, and the companion parable in the two succeeding verses, the 'leaven,' teach us the same lesson, viz., that the smallest beginnings may have mighty issues for good or evil. Observe there must *be* a beginning ; some people seem to wait for results without doing anything on their own part. The Hebrew writers speak of the mustard tree as one to be climbed ; Rabbi Calipha writes, 'A stalk of mustard-seed was in my field, into which I was used to climb, as men do into a fig-tree.' This parable refers chiefly to the outward growth of Christ's Kingdom ; the companion parable dwells on the inward working, the all-penetrating power of the Gospel.

33. Who can explain how leaven acts ? It acts silently, it is *hidden* in the meal ; but it acts surely, it does its work effectually (1 Cor. v. 6). None can exactly follow the workings of God's grace in another person's heart ; it is at first a silent, hidden work, but its results are in due season visible and unmistakable. Is the Holy Spirit working in *my* heart ?

34. Teaching by parables is peculiarly adapted to Eastern minds. Mention some of the earlier Old Testament parables.

35. See Psa. lxxviii. 2.

36. How graphic this ! Should not *we*, unwilling to show our ignorance before the multitude, have done the same ?

37. How readily He complies, never pleading fatigue after long teaching and many toils. He Who gives *us* rest took but little of it Himself. 'The Son of man.' This is Christ's general designation of Himself, to show us that He is indeed our elder Brother, wearing our form, our nature. But no lips save His own ever used the words in Scripture, except when Stephen, just before his death, said he saw 'the Son of man standing at the right hand of God' (Acts vii. 56).

38. What a wide field the world is ! How many labourers are needed ! Are *we* workers ? Observe, it is *His* field ; sin-laden and sorrow-laden as earth is, it is His inheritance still.

39. It is God only Who can separate the true from the false professors ; *we* cannot distinguish, He will. We are forbidden even to *try* to judge others ; let us keenly examine ourselves.

40. The harvest finds some ripe for destruction, some for glory. The time is drawing on ; am I ready for it ?

41. The reapers are the angels. Notice the extent and grandeur of their ministry. They shall root out all that offend, or cause to offend.

42. The tares shall be burnt before the wheat is housed. 'A furnace of fire'—penal, not purifying fire. The descriptions of hell and of heaven are alike brief in Scripture, probably because we should not understand fuller details ; 'eye hath not seen' either world.

43. 'Shine forth,' etc. ; this implies that the Christian is now under a cloud. What matters it ? *This* cloud has a golden lining ; 'this darkness is the shadow of God's wing.' Soon it will for ever pass, and we shall have more than the *shadow* of His wing, for He will 'cover us with His feathers,' and we shall be *satisfied then*. Moreover, they 'shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.' The wayworn traveller will be no bashful stranger amidst that glory, for the palace is *Home* ; his Father's house, where he is come to dwell, a tired, toil-worn child, forgetting the weary journey, for he is at home at last, at home for ever. O Father, bring *us* thither for Christ's sake. Amen.

44. This parable and the next show the priceless value of the Gospel ; the first represents the treasure found without seeking—the other shows it *sought* and found. The Philippian jailer sought it (Acts xvi. 30) ; to Lydia it came unsought (verse 14), when God ‘opened her heart.’ ‘Hidden in a field,’ no rare thing even now in disturbed unsettled countries ; by Jewish law it belonged to the finder. He ‘hideth’ ; what a touch of nature ! But he who finds the true riches seldom hides them, for *this* treasure grows by being shared.

45. In this parable the treasure is sought, not found accidentally ; found, too, by a merchantman, whose *business* it was to seek such things. The most valuable pearls were supposed to come from India and the Red Sea. Pliny says that the two largest pearls ever known, worth about £80,000 each, were in the possession of Cleopatra, who had the astounding folly to dissolve one, and drink it off, at a supper which she gave to M. Antony.

46. We learn three truths from these two parables : 1st, the pricelessness of the treasure ; 2nd, that it is priceless only to those who are willing to part with all for it, *i.e.* to give up anything that would prevent their getting it ; 3rd, that some find it unsought, like all Gentile converts—others seek it, like Nathanael, Nicodemus, John’s disciples, and all those who ‘looked for redemption in Israel.’ Those who find unsought have usually the liveliest joy ; those who *seek* Christ have the deepest appreciation of Him. Surely the returning prodigal valued his father’s love and home more intensely for the long toilsome journey.

48. See on verse 24, they ‘sat down,’ implying that the work needed time and patient care.

49, 50. Find other texts on the ministry of angels. In heaven *we* too shall work, thank God, for we shall be as happy as they are ; and one of the chief elements of happiness is earnest loving work for our dear Lord. Am I working for Him *now* ?

51. How patiently He taught them !

52. Old truths with ever new forms and applications.

53-58. These particulars in the human history of Christ are full of interest. See Matt. xii. 47. Christ committing Mary to the care of John, makes it difficult to suppose that His 'brethren' were her children, as these good and faithful men would have taken tender charge of her. We cannot dwell too much on the wondrous union of the Godhead and the Manhood of our Lord. Shortly before his death Charles Kingsley said : 'I cannot *live* without the Man Christ Jesus. Listen to Him when He whispers to you, "Come unto Me, thou weary and heavy-laden heart, and I will give thee rest." Whatever else I cannot trust, there is One Whom I can trust utterly.' To his wife, who seemed to be dying, and whose extreme danger was the shock which rendered his illness fatal, though she afterwards recovered, he said : 'It is not darkness you are going to, for God is light. It is not lonely, for Christ is with you. It is not an unknown country, for Christ is there.'

CHAPTER XIV.

1. HEROD ANTIPAS, son of Herod the Great, ruler of a fourth part of the kingdom, his share being Galilee and Peræa.

2. The murdered prophet haunted him ; he was a Sadducee, and denied the resurrection ; yet the terrors of conscience were too strong for him. Some thought it was Elijah, in fulfilment of Malachi iv. 5.

3. See Matthew iv. 12. The scene of John's imprisonment was a castle, near that part of the Dead Sea where the Jordan falls into it ; he had now been a captive for about a year and a half, a period which must have seemed long and dreary indeed but for the unspeakable consolations that God never withholds from those who suffer for Him. How sore a trial after his life in the wilderness to be actually 'bound,' as well as in prison ! The true wife of Herod Antipas was the daughter of Aretas, King of Arabia, mentioned 2 Cor. xi. 32, who fought against

and defeated Herod Antipas, on account of the insult offered to her.

4. What noble courage! Mention similar instances in Scripture, that storehouse of heroic deeds. Why was it not lawful? For three reasons: 1st, she was his niece, being Herod the Great's grandchild; 2nd, her husband still lived; and 3rd, Herod Antipas' wife was also living: and it is only in Old Testament history that we read of a plurality of wives. Had the Baptist uttered but one word palliating Herod's sin, he might have been free; but that word he never spake. And now his work was finished; the long captivity, too, had done *its* work in preparing him for brighter things, and his home in God's Paradise was ready.

5. Herod feared the people, who loved and honoured the Baptist; he also feared John, but John had no fear of *him*. 'The righteous are bold as a lion' (Prov. xxviii. 1). At John's bidding, Herod 'did many things,' but kept Herodias still. For fuller details see Mark vi. 17-29.

6. Mark says, 'When a convenient day was come.' Satan is sure to find a convenient day for the carrying out of some planned crime. See the meshes of sin! Herod's wickedness brought Herodias to his court; she brought Salome, her daughter by Philip. Salome's dancing was the occasion of Herod's oath, and of the Baptist's death. Twice we read in Scripture of a birthday being kept, that of Pharaoh (Gen. xl. 20), followed by the execution of his chief baker; and Herod's, followed by the beheading of John.

7. A rash, foolish oath, which it was a great sin to keep.

8. What a request from a girl's lips! but, alas! she had been put forward by 'her mother,' to whom she went for advice how to turn Herod's oath to most advantage—and *this* was the mother's suggestion. There are few more awful verses than 2 Chron. xxii. 3, which speaks of Athaliah as her son's 'counsellor to do wickedly.' Very wicked women are viler than the vilest men, because they have broken through much stronger safeguards and restraints, and show more daring. So

far from demurring to it, Salome, vile child of a vile mother, 'came in straightway with haste' on her horrid errand. A 'charger' was a large dish.

9. The king, so styled by courtesy, was 'exceeding sorry,' for he had 'heard John gladly.' He was even angry, and alarmed at the consequences of an act so unpopular. Nevertheless, through false shame, which makes cowards of so many, he yielded.

10. Perhaps the servant of God was sleeping, perhaps he was praying, when the dungeon door opened, never to close on him again. Happy, blessed martyr! passing by one swift stroke from pain to peace; from darkness into everlasting light; from solitude into the glorious company of the redeemed; putting off this transitory life to put on immortality.

11. Some writers think that John had been removed from Machærus to some prison nearer Tiberias, where Herod's court was; or it may have been that the festivities extended over several days, thus allowing time for the journey. Josephus says that Herodias, with an execrable refinement of cruelty, on receiving the head, stuck the tongue full of needles.

12. John's mourning disciples now came direct to Jesus. It was well they did; it is well, indeed, for *us* to imitate them. He loves us as none but Christ can love. His heart is the very throne of pity. Go to Him in sorrow, in joy, and thankfulness; in bereavement, in temptation; in trial of whatsoever kind, and tell Him *all*; keep no part of your care back from Him, but in all time of your tribulation, in all time of your wealth, 'go and tell Jesus.'

13. We know not what Christ answered John's disciples, but perhaps He 'wept' over their grief. Luke ix. 10 tells us that He departed to a city called Bethsaida, north-east of the Lake of Galilee, which He crossed to get there; therefore it was not the Bethsaida in the region of Gennesaret.

He retired into the desert, probably, 1st, to avoid plots against Himself, consequent on John's death; 2nd, to open out further truths to His Apostles, now returned from their mission;

3rd, for rest and prayer. Rest! He Who came to still earth's deep *unrest*, Who bids us, weary and heavy laden, come unto Him and find rest unto our souls, knew little repose here, while He tarried with us; quitting for a season the eternal peace of heaven to still *our* hearts' tossings, to open unto us the gate of that enduring Home where toil and weariness can find no entrance.

The eager crowds followed Him on foot, *i.e.* by land, not in ships. This is the first instance of all the Gospels narrating the same history. See more details in Mark vi. and John vi.

14. He went forth to them, all thought of needed rest laid aside. He 'came to minister'; and His followers have no higher joy than to tread in their dear Master's footsteps in ministering to others. John gives us Christ's question to Philip, and Andrew's remark about the lad who alone possessed any food.

15. 'Evening.' This probably means afternoon; the later 'evening,' verse 23, means sunset, or *after* sunset. In their eagerness to hear Christ even hunger and fatigue were forgotten. Are *we* half as earnest?

16. How perplexing this must have seemed! but John vi. 6 tells us that 'He Himself knew what He would do.' No matter, ~~therefore~~, that they did *not* know. These are exquisite words. In all *our* needs He knows what He will do, how and when He will help us. The wonted channels of succour are all dried up, perhaps; but unexpected channels open. His resources are infinite; beyond our necessities, beyond our thoughts. Go forward in His strength, and an unseen path will open for you, just as you reach the spot beyond which it now seems impossible to pass.

17. Enough, perhaps, for Christ's little band.

18. It is in the right and liberal, yet careful use of what we have, that God gives more. Never was nobler liberality shown than by the widow of Zarephath (1 Kings xvii. 10-16). This is the secret of multiplying our every talent: bring it to Christ, whether it be money, or time, or health, or ability,

bring it to Him, use it for Him ; He knows what He will do with it. Very likely He will at first give you what look like small humble duties ; do them *well*. Those little duties are like the small pieces of mosaic in some inlaid work ; omit one of them, and it becomes, and remains, incomplete. If there, it might never be noticed, you think ; but if *not* there, what a gap it leaves !

19. There was much grass in the bushy wastes near Bethsaida. Notice the order in which they sat ; partly because they could thus be served more conveniently, and also that their number might be readily ascertained. Looking up to heaven, He brake the loaves, having first 'blessed' them, which was the very crisis of the miracle. The loaves, made of barley—a cheap food, barely one-third the value of wheat—were rather cakes, broad, thin, and brittle like our biscuits, requiring to be broken rather than cut. He distributed by the hands of His disciples, just as He uses human agency now.

20. 'They were all filled,' all the Evangelists tell us this—'took up of the broken pieces.' There were two reasons for this—to show the full extent of the miracle, and to enforce the valuable lesson never to waste God's bounty. The 'baskets' were probably those used by the Jews to carry hay to sleep upon, and not handbaskets used for food. These last were used after the feeding of the four thousand (Matt. xv. 37).

21. Probably few women and children ; only males being obliged to attend the Passover.

The barrel of meal (1 Kings xvii. 16) is a faint foreshadowing of this miracle ; and so are Elisha's pots of oil (2 Kings iv. 3-6) ; and the twenty loaves (verses 42-44) of the same chapter.

22. Again Christ seeks the much-needed rest, which He had vainly sought before. 'Constrained' implies that the disciples were unwilling to go without Him, perhaps lingering till dark, in hopes that He would join them.

He sent them to the other Bethsaida, across the lake, on its western shore.

23. Mention other occasions when He was on a mountain ; also other mountains named in Scripture, and what occurred on each.

From that lonely summit in the grass-grown desert of Bethsaida, He watched through the midnight hours the tossing vessel. How it would have comforted the disciples to *know* that ! Let it cheer *us* to know that in *our* sore struggles with pain, and sorrow, and temptation, His eye is on us too ; and that He is the Master of every sorrow that we can possibly have. Perhaps the weary disciples, 'distressed in rowing' (Mark vi. 48), thought themselves forgotten ; but He *never* forgets His own. Even a mother *may* forget her babe, but Jesus *never*. What must prayer have been to Him ! even to us, if we are His, it is the very breath of life ; a balmy air, not from our lost Paradise, but from that happier Eden where no blight ever falls.

24. 'It was now dark, and Jesus was not come unto them' (John vi. 17). So it is with the Christian ; he is waiting for the light. The darkness is deepest just before the dawn ; the dark cloud covers him ere he discerns the bow in it. He saw the boisterous wind, the tossing waves, the weary rowers ; He marked it all. He knows when *we* are weary, not *of* His blessed service, but *in* it. How sweet when we lie down at night, to feel that the tired brain or limbs are tired in *His* work, and that '*so* He giveth His beloved sleep' (Psa. cxvii. 2), watching us with unslumbering Eye through the darkness that is no darkness to Him.

Some day He will watch over us in the darkness of the grave, as we lie till the resurrection morn in the sweeter sleep of death.

25. 'The fourth watch,' *i.e.* from three to six a.m. The laws of gravitation were suspended by their Framer. See Job ix. 8.

26. How often we dread what proves to be a blessing ! How often, too, do we think help far off, when the next moment brings it ! Luke xxiv. 37 shows that this was not the

only occasion on which they were terrified, thinking Him a spirit.

27. 'Be of good cheer.' So He said to Paul (Acts xxiii. 11). Mention similar expressions in Scripture. 'It is *I*.' Ah! they knew His voice! What mattered the darkness and the storm, when *He* was there? The tempest raged as fiercely as before, for they must 'receive Him into the ship' ere He would quell it. What a lesson for us, that we must receive Him into our hearts, ere He speaks the word of power that stills *our* deep unrest!

28. Only Matthew relates this incident. Peter was, perhaps, more susceptible than the rest to such appeals. John, who lived to soar beyond them all, was then very young. Peter did not say '*Let* me come,' but '*Bid* me come.' Explain the difference.

29. Whilst Peter looked only at Christ, he walked on the water, safely upheld by Him to Whom he looked. A steadfast trust in our unseen but ever-present Helper brings special aid in *our* needs, however great.

30. When he looked at the waves he began to sink, and felt that his bold experiment had failed. We look far too much at the storm-clouds, the raging billows of adversity, instead of fastening our eyes on Him Who 'is mightier than the noise of many waters' (Psa. xciii. 4). The difficulties, which no effort of our own can remove or lessen, are *His* concern, *His* care, not ours. In such cases our sole business is with Him Who manages for us. We *must* simply cast ourselves on Christ as Peter did, or we perish.

31. He was not kept a moment in suspense, for immediately Jesus caught him. Oh, what the grasp of that Hand must have been to His servant! What will it be to feel that same Hand laid 'on our heads in Paradise! The rebuke was not uttered while Peter was sinking, but while he was safely held. None will ever perish clinging to Him, for no man shall 'snatch them out of My Hand' (John x. 28). 'Of *little* faith,' Christ owns that there was *some*. How rich in lessons is this

thrilling story ! It teaches us, 1st, that it is unwise to place ourselves in needless danger ; 2nd, that we are utterly weak, and have no dependence but on Christ ; 3rd, that in Him we are safe ; 4th, that His gracious help is always ready, when we own our helplessness.

32. Straightway the boat was at the land whither they went. This was a fresh miracle ; while they were lost in wonder at the stilling of the winds and waves, the vessel, unnoticed, glided swiftly through the quiet deep (Psa. cvii. 30).

33. Mark vi. 51 says : ' They were sore amazed in themselves.' The words in the original are still stronger, so strong that they have no English equivalent.

34. Gennesaret, a district four miles long by two and a half broad, stretches along the west shore of the sea. They landed at Capernaum.

35, 36. Our Lord's popularity was now at its height.

CHAPTER XV.

1. As Christ did not go to the Passover, on account of the plots of the Jews, the Scribes and Pharisees came northward to *Him*. The Scribes were not a sect, but an order of men—probably Levites—devoted to literature and teaching.

2. Find other texts relating to this washing. See Mark vii. 3-5.

3. Christ, as His manner often was, answered by another question. The Pharisees transgressed God's commandment ; His disciples only transgressed the tradition of men.

4. Speaking evil—here translated cursing—includes every species of undutiful conduct. Ezek. xxii. 7 speaks of ' setting light by father and mother.' How many do this, perhaps without realising the wrong that it is ! They call their parents' opinions old-fashioned prejudices, obsolete, much less enlightened than their own more just views. By degrees these thoughts find utterance in smiles, and disrespectful looks ; then in words, perhaps in disobedience. Before you decide that you are wiser than your parents, find out very carefully *why*

they think thus or thus, and then turn 'to the law, and to the testimony' (Isa. viii. 20), to see what Scripture says. You may perhaps find no direct mention of the actual point at issue, for the Bible is a far grander book than if it chiefly consisted of a series of prohibitions. It lays down great principles, which include all details. Perhaps the one solitary instance in the Bible of minute prohibitions is the eleventh chapter of Leviticus, from which an Israelite might safely infer that he might eat anything *not* forbidden. Among the great principles of Scripture, reverence to elders and superiors, and especially to parents, holds a very prominent place; so do humility and teachableness.

5. Mark (vii. 11) gives the exact word that Christ used, as he often does—'Corban,' a gift, *i.e.* dedicated to pious uses, perhaps in a fit of superstitious anger, or to avoid having to support aged parents.

6-8. How constantly Christ enforces simple, practical *duty*, the duty that lies *nearest* to us! How continually He, and His disciples after Him, quote the Old Testament as our inspired rule of action. Verse 8 refers to lip-service, like too many of our prayers. Were our wandering thoughts in prayer written down, they would make one of the most awful books ever penned; not from the actual sinfulness of the thoughts, but from their blending with our holiest utterances. Yet Our Father, with His eye on every heart, pities and loves us *still*! Are such thoughts a grief to you, or a mere matter of course?

9. See a reference to the commandments of men in Col. ii. 21, 22. Mark vii. 7, 8, gives further details.

10, 11. This teaches the difference between real and ceremonial pollution.

12. The Pharisees did not express their anger to Christ Himself, but to His disciples, who went and told Him.

13. The garden of the Lord shall yet be cleared of these proud Pharisees. We too have each a soul-garden entrusted to our keeping, and every noxious plant in it *must* be rooted out, however painful the uprooting may be; the deeper the fibres have penetrated, the keener the pang.

14. Ruinous effects of false teaching.

15. 'Parable' here means weighty maxim.

16. Their slowness of spiritual understanding grieved their Master, but did not anger Him. How *we* grieve Him by our dulness and distrust !

17, 18. The heart is the fountain of life or of death ; sanctification must begin *there*. The marginal reading of Prov. iv. 23 is very striking, 'Keep thy heart above all keeping.' May God help us to do this, for we cannot do it of ourselves.

19, 20. This catalogue is fuller in St. Mark vii. 21, 22, and ends with 'foolishness' ; both begin with 'evil thoughts.' Why is such prominence given to them ? 'Evil thoughts' are at the bottom of all sin ; 'foolishness' is the precursor of many.

21. Christ usually took a north-westerly course in His ministry. 'Tyre and Sidon' were in the extreme north-west corner of the land. Tyre consists now of a few fishermen's huts, but it was once so strong a city that Nebuchadnezzar besieged it thirteen years. Sidon, now called Saida, is thought to have been founded by Sidon, the son of Canaan. It is mentioned by Homer, while Tyre is not. These heathen territories were now to have their day of grace, their one golden opportunity had they accepted it.

22. She was a Canaanite, a Greek, *i.e.* a Gentile, a Syrophœnician by nation. The Syrophœnicians were a race descended from Syrians and Phœnicians. One wonders how she heard of Him, but a mother's love is quick in hearing of possible help for a suffering child. Though no Israelite, she salutes Him as Israel's Messiah, whilst 'His own received Him not.'

23. It seems by St. Mark's account (vii. 24, 25) that she first sought Him in the house ; that He and His disciples quitted it, and then she followed, crying after Him. 'She crieth after *us*,' the disciples complained ; but it was only *One* she wanted. Are *we* seeking that One ? Mark says 'the child (verse 30, Revised Version) : poor child ! enduring the utter most woe !

24. How discouraging was His silence ; and when He spoke, how much more discouraging were His words !

25. Her faith accepts no repulse ; her artless prayer, ' Lord, help me,' was better than any argument.

26. The Jews used to call all Gentiles, ' dogs.' Is this the death of her hopes ? No ; though had faith been in less lively exercise it well might have been. A commander-in-chief places his bravest troops in the forefront of the battle ; so God tries His best beloved most sorely. Not thus did Christ speak to him who said, ' Lord, if Thou wilt,' etc. (Matt. viii. 2.) ; nor to that almost despairing father who cried, ' If Thou canst do anything, have compassion on us, and help us ' (Mark ix. 22). Such a reply would have plunged either of these suppliants into the lowest depths ; but in this wondrous and solitary instance He repulsed and upheld at the same moment. Mark vii. 27, gives one comforting word, ' Let the children *first* be filled.'

27. Not for one moment does she resent the appellation, but, humbly owning herself to be a dog, she argues her case on that very ground. How differently Christ dealt with the woman of Samaria !

28. And now the hard trial of her faith is over, her heart's desire granted ; and above all, it is granted with words of most precious praise. Mention other words of commendation uttered by Him. What a motive for earnest toil, self-sacrifice, and patient endurance, He gives us in the promised ' Well done, good and faithful servant ! ' What a moment it will be when we *hear* it ! But *shall* we hear it ? *Are* we His faithful servants ? He knows, and we ought to know. That very hour the prayer was granted. Picture the mother's home-coming ! a foretaste of that blessed home-coming when many a mother who, perhaps to life's last hour, has mourned her blighted child, receives him, not as she last beheld him, but clothed in immortal beauty ; yet by full and perfect mutual certainty of recognition, her own on earth once, her own now for ever, in that wondrous meeting-place, the Paradise of God. How

one longs and yearns to be there ! It is touching to notice how full Scripture is of instances of tender human love. If we seek the tenderest utterances of it that can be found, we know *where* to find them.

29. A mountain-range, in Decapolis, bounding the north-east of the lake. How many journeys Christ took ! So did St. Paul, His great follower. See 2 Cor. xi. 23-28.

30. 'Cast them down.' Notice their helplessness ; yet to be 'cast down' at the feet of Jesus was everything to them. Let us cast ourselves with our burden of sin and sorrow at the foot of His cross, and cling there till He bids us go in peace. Besides the lame, blind, dumb, and maimed, there were 'many others,' too numerous to be described.

31. It mattered not what ailed them, He healed them all. He knew how many of them would go away with little gratitude in their hearts ; but no unworthiness of theirs could check His Divine compassion. He healed them, not because they deserved it, but simply because they came to Him, or were 'cast down' before Him, for sorely-needed help. To be 'cast down at Jesus' feet' was a grander thing than to sit on Cæsar's throne.

32. 'I have compassion,' an expression of that deep emotion that so often heralded a work of mercy. 'Nothing to eat,' probably the little store they had brought with them was now finished ; in their eagerness they seem to have forgotten it, but *not so Jesus*. The uncomplained-of want moved Him to tenderest pity. They had been with Him three days. Notice their earnestness ; how different *we* are ! Some, alas ! barely give Him three minutes ere they rush off to the day's pursuits, all of which are more congenial than sitting at the Master's feet.

33. How strange to ask this question after seeing the former miracle ! Perhaps they thought He would only do it for Jews, and these were Gentiles. We should have expected them to say 'Master, feed them.' We need 'line upon line' ere we trust Him.

34-37. Point out the differences and the resemblances between the two miracles. The word 'baskets' is different in the Greek, in the two miracles. In the former miracle the basket was of great size. Paul was let down in one (2 Cor. xi. 23). Giving thanks at meals was a Jewish custom. Our 'grace' is derived from 'gratias,' thanks.

38. Mark viii. 9 says 'about four thousand.' Matthew, of all the Evangelists, is most particular about numbers; this might be expected from his former occupation.

39. Magdala, west of the lake; hence probably Mary Magdalene's name. The landing-place was Dalmanutha (Mark viii. 10). On this occasion He crossed the lake with His disciples.

CHAPTER XVI.

1. SEE Matt. xii. 38. The Pharisees and Sadducees, differing in many things, agreed perfectly in trying to harass Christ. Mention some 'signs from heaven' in the Old Testament.

2, 3. The same careful observation would have helped them to discover the signs of those times; Daniel's seventy weeks fulfilled, the sceptre departed from Judah, etc. What are some of the signs of *our* times?

4. The conduct of Jonah was a complete contrast to that of Christ; he was rebellious, selfish, murmuring, self-justifying. In what way then was he 'a sign'? 'He left them and departed,' probably with marked displeasure. Mark adds the touching words (viii. 12), 'He sighed deeply in His spirit,' as if cut to the heart by their wickedness. How abhorrent sin is to the most Holy One! Are *our* sins grieving Him to-day?

5. Mark says they had but 'one loaf' (chap. viii. 14). Notice the graphic details in this briefest of the Gospels.

6. 'Leaven,' that is, teaching; the teaching both of the Pharisees and Sadducees was bad, though in the doctrines taught they differed much.

7. How their obtuseness tried Him! Mark viii. 17-21 gives nine rapid questions; their very rapidity indicates a

pained spirit. The disciples only attempted to answer two, the easiest and the least personal. He seems hurt and wounded by their dulness and low thoughts of Him. Was it likely that the solemn warning in verse 6 referred to *bread*?

8. He evidently left the care of His temporal provision to the twelve; and they, finding their supply so small, felt themselves unworthy of such a trust, and could not realise that what occupied their thoughts was so remote from His.

9-11. We all need a much more lively remembrance of God's past mercies, to quicken our hope and trust in His unfailing care and goodness for the time to come. He carefully notes the details of the two miracles, even distinguishing the two kinds of baskets used. When, in dreamy indolence or self-importance, we neglect details, we are not following His example. His miracles were never wrought at random.

12. At last they grasp His meaning; Christ's patient teaching overcame their dulness. Let us earnestly strive to profit far more than we do by 'the line upon line, precept upon precept,' that *we* are set to learn. Yet it is better to be even the dullest beginner on His lowest form, than to take the highest place in earthly knowledge and distinction.

13. Cæsarea Philippi, a quiet retreat at the foot of Mount Lebanon, beyond the bounds of Palestine, received its first name in honour of the infamous Tiberius; its second from Philip the tetrarch (Luke iii. 1), who rebuilt it, and gave it this double name to distinguish it from Cæsarea, a seaport on the Mediterranean.

14. Here we have three different opinions. Some, like Herod (Mark vi. 16), mistook Him for the Baptist, perhaps because both taught the new doctrine. Others thought He was Elijah, whose return the Jews anticipated, and who had done mighty works. Jeremiah was 'the weeping prophet'; was *this* his resemblance to the 'Man of sorrows'? How did Jeremiah get that appellation? Chiefly perhaps from his Lamentations. See also Jer. ix. 1.

15. 'But Whom say *ye* that I am?' This is a vital question.

What do *you* think of Him ? Is He *your own Saviour* ? The whole issues of eternity hang on your answer to the inquiry, 'What is He, in my inmost heart, to *me* ?' Just as we shall die each alone, and are living meanwhile, so far as our inner life is concerned, each *alone*, so must we one day each stand, solitary amidst millions, at God's awful judgment-seat. Therefore I ask you, with the deep earnestness of one who will most surely meet you there, 'What think *you* of Christ ?'

16. Peter's is no tame confession of faith, such as we too often make, when our lips, but not our thoughts, are following the creeds in church. His was a rapture of adoration. Nathanael spoke in the same spirit (John i. 49).

17. Christ's sad heart was doubtless cheered by this noble testimony. What an honour to Peter ! Do *we* wish that we could do something for Him, could 'minister' to Him ? Surely we can ; He has left us His poor to succour, to take thought for ; and inasmuch as we do it unto them, we do it unto *Him*. Feed His lambs ; comfort His sorrowing ones wherever you find them : even if you fear that they are not His at all, tend them still. The 'cords of love' by which He draws home His wanderers are oft-times woven of the strands of human sympathy and tenderness.

18. As Peter bore testimony to Christ, so Christ bears testimony to Peter. See John i. 42. This exalted play upon the words 'Peter' and 'rock' is only seen in languages where the same word has both meanings, as 'Pierre,' in French. Christ's Church rests, not on Peter, but on this true confession of faith. 'My Church' occurs nowhere else in the Gospels.

19. This privilege was soon extended to all the Apostles (Matt. xviii. 18). As the first, on this occasion, in confessing Christ, Peter received this honour earliest. Keys are the emblems of authority ; these were probably the keys of the Gospel treasure, unlocked by the Apostles. With these, on the day of Pentecost, Peter 'opened the door of faith' to the Jews ; and later on, to the Gentiles in the person of Cornelius. No

supremacy whatever was given to Peter over his brethren. 'Bind' probably means declaring unlawful; 'loose,' declaring lawful. The Apostles announced the lawfulness of many things previously forbidden by the ceremonial law.

20. Because His time was not yet come; they were first to be eye-witnesses of His sufferings, of His glorious resurrection and ascension, and of the coming of the Holy Ghost.

21. He dwelt on these things oftener and more plainly.

22. Loving, but presumptuous words! Elated by Christ's precious praise and blessing, he dares to 'bind' his Master, Who had said (verse 21) that 'He *must*' do and suffer these things. Doubtless Peter meant, 'If *I* can prevent it, this shall not be, Lord.'

23. Peter had rebuked Christ; now Christ rebukes Peter, and very sharply. 'Get thee behind Me, Satan'—the very same word (in the Greek) spoken in the temptation (Matt. iv. 10). At that moment Peter's voice was a whisper from hell—doubtless the Satanic hosts had often breathed such suggestions before; for, when the tempter left Him, it was only 'for a season' (Luke iv. 13). If, like the Roman Catholics, we take Peter to be literally the 'rock' on which Christ's Church is built, we must now take him to be literally 'Satan.' Therefore we see plainly that both verses are figurative.

24. Even to crucifixion in those days. St. John is thought to have been the only one of the Apostles who died a natural death. 'If *any* man'—there is no exception to this: no crown without the cross. 'If any man *will*,' etc.; surely, then, whosoever *will* come, *may*. 'Deny himself,' in the trifles of daily life. 'Take up his cross,' etc. See on Matt. x. 38.

25. The lower life for the higher; 'would save,' is bent on saving.

26. Two solemn questions, given by Matthew and Mark; Luke gives only the first. If Satan came and offered us the world in exchange for our souls, every one of us would recoil from him; perhaps reject the bribe with horror. He carries

his point by the mighty power of 'littles.' Here one concession made by conscience, there another, till we have wholly crossed the border line, and are his own subjects. How hard to retrace our steps !

27. We are told repeatedly of the coming of the Son of Man with the holy angels (1 Thess. iv. 16 ; 2 Thess. i. 7). Our works have not the smallest part in our salvation—that is Christ's work ; but, as regards our future reward, we receive it according to our own labour (1 Cor. iii. 8). See also the parable of the pounds (Luke xix. 13-26). But *never* think you *deserve* good things from God, lest the Judge bid you 'depart.' Oh! shame, to be put to shame before such a glorious company !

28. Till they see the firm establishment of Christ's kingdom.

CHAPTER XVII.

1. Six days. Luke ix. 28 says, '*about* eight days,' meaning on the eighth day ; *i.e.* after an interval of six days. After telling His disciples of His coming death, He now shows them how glorious it would be in the sight of heaven. Peter, James, and John, partners once in secular business, were the sole Apostolic witnesses of three wondrous scenes—the raising of Jairus' daughter, the Transfiguration, the agony in the garden. A high mountain near the lake ; not Mount Tabor, with which the facts do not agree.

2. He went up to pray (Luke ix. 28) ; and, as He was praying, 'the fashion of His countenance was altered.' Nor has prayer, even such poor prayer as ours, wholly lost this transfiguring power. We kneel down burdened, heavy-laden ; and, if we can but leave our sin and sorrow at the feet of Jesus, we rise up with His peace on our brow. What a contrast did Christ's glorious Face then present to 'that visage marred' ! Yet it was the *same* Face illumined. His raiment, too, became white as the light—the light from *within*.

3. We should have thought them angels, had not their names been given. Moses, the representative of the law ;

Elijah, of the prophets; one of them buried by God in a grave that none ever knew (Deut. xxxiv. 5, 6); the other never having tasted death at all. They were 'talking with' Jesus. Blessed, holy intercourse! Luke alone tells us of what they spoke (chap. ix. 31); viz., of His decease—literally exodus—which He accomplished at Jerusalem, in that solemn moment, watched by hosts of fallen and unfallen angels, when He yielded up His spirit.

4. Luke adds that, during part of this converse, the disciples were 'heavy with sleep'—as the same three were during the agony in the garden; but they awoke in time to see His glory, and His two companions. Peter's readiness to suggest and propose, appears in this instance most reasonable. It *was* 'good' to be there. Surely, if they recognised Moses and Elijah, whom they had never seen, *we* shall know our loved ones who are at home with Jesus! It is wonderful how any one can doubt this for a moment. Our chief joy will be to see and commune with our risen Saviour, and to know that (after life's failures) we please Him perfectly; but other sources of gladness will make the full river of our bliss overflow for ever.

5. 'A bright cloud'; *all* clouds have a silver lining, if faith in God's love and Fatherhood enables us to look up to Him through the darkness. 'A voice' (2 Peter i. 17, 18).

6. Only Matthew gives us the particulars of the fear that naturally fell upon the Apostles, and of Christ's comforting words.

7. He 'touched them.' Oh! tender re-assuring touch! Give other instances of its effect.

8. Encouraged by His hand and voice, they look up and see 'Jesus only.' That was enough; I feel sure that, if in Paradise we might see 'Jesus only' till the resurrection morn, it would be to us as a millennium of measureless content and bliss; and His own lips would tell us of our dear ones who, like ourselves, were looking with glad loving eyes on 'Jesus only,' too. Had they opened their eyes to see Moses or

Elijah only, and to find their Master finally gone, they would have been broken-hearted ; and both we and they would have been for ever lost. No ; He stayed to *die*—to die that we might live.

9. They seem to have obeyed the charge, feeling, doubtless, that such a scene was too hallowed for publicity. Well might they be forbidden to speak of His glory, while yet so ignorant of His sufferings as to question among themselves ‘what the rising again from the dead should mean’ (Mark ix. 10).

10. It seems strange that this, though a natural question, should be the *first* they asked.

11. John Baptist did not himself restore all things ; he pointed to Him Who came to make all things new.

12, 13. They had slain John, done unto him whatsoever they listed : ‘list’ is an old word for ‘like’ or ‘choose.’ ‘The wind bloweth where it listeth’ (John iii. 8).

14. We cannot picture the Transfiguration ; but we can in some degree picture the next scene—an excited crowd, perplexed Apostles, an anxious father, a heavily afflicted sufferer. Jesus, sorely needed, came towards them, the transfiguration glory still partly visible on His brow ; for Mark ix. 15 tells us that the people, seeing Him, were greatly amazed, and running to Him, saluted Him.

15. Listen to the piteous story. Oft-times falling into the fire or into the water, not merely through the helplessness of epilepsy, but by the malice of an evil spirit—‘a dumb spirit,’ Mark calls him (ix. 17)—which tore, or ‘dashed him’ (marg. ref.), till the bruised, broken, hopeless life was ‘pining away.’ Luke adds the touching words, ‘he is mine *only* child.’ Amos viii. 10 gives the mourning for an only son as the type of bitterest woe ; and this father’s sorrow was far, far worse than his child’s death could have caused, even had he been all a parent could desire. *This was a living sorrow*, always there ; we are mercifully permitted in the course of years to outlive the pangs of bereavement. They never, in true hearts, become *dead* sorrows ; but tender flowers of memory, and glad, loving

anticipation, bloom on the green sod once watered by bitter heart-wrung tears.

16. The nine could not cure him—well might it be beyond their power, as they stood appalled at such evidences of Satanic malignity.

17. 'Bring him hither to Me.' No sadder case was ever brought to Jesus; for we do not read that the demoniac who dwelt among the tombs was 'brought' to Him—no one could or durst have done it; he 'met,' or ran to meet Him. Most of those who came to Him, if lame, could see, and hear, and think; if blind, could walk, and speak, and pray. When called to Jairus' little daughter, He found her in the sweet, calm sleep of death; but *this* poor stricken one had been a life-long sorrow, deepening, darkening always. Thank God that trials on which Time lays no healing touch are *exceptional* trials; and for those who bear them according to the will of God, heaven will be all the brighter for the long shadows that have darkened earth.

18. Mark ix. 20, and Luke ix. 42, tell us that the devil, conscious of Christ's power, tried his utmost to destroy the sufferer ere he left him. Christ saw it all, but conversed with the father till the crowd came up, that they might hear and witness all. What agonizing suspense for the father, already discouraged by the failure of the Apostles, and the violence of the evil spirit in Christ's very presence! Evidently he had more confidence in Christ's mercy than in His power, for he says (Mark ix. 22), 'If Thou canst do anything'—sad, despairing words—'have compassion on us, and help us.' 'Us,' not 'him.' No, he identifies himself with his child. None but a parent would willingly claim kindred with so forlorn a victim; but in such fathomless depths of woe and degradation, he is still the poor father's 'son.' Oh, what well-springs of pity and tenderness lie in a parent's heart! What, then, must be the Fatherhood of God? The answer to the question, 'If Thou canst do,' etc., is, 'If thou canst believe.' Then follows the pathetic cry (and words of deeper pathos have been rarely

breathed by mortal man), 'I believe, help Thou mine unbelief.' Well might he cry out with tears—tears from one of the deepest fountains of the heart. May his prayer be ours also, for our faith is strangely mingled with unbelief. The moment that the poor father perceived that the cure hinged on his own faith in the great Healer, and made his humble, pitiful confession, Christ granted all he sought; but the spirit, hoping to destroy the sufferer, made so violent an effort, that many said, 'He is dead.' Not so; Christ took him by the hand, lifted him up, and he arose, cured from that very hour. What a contrast their home-coming to the sad journey thither! Thank God for that father's gladness!

19, 20. Christ often reproved His own Apostles for unbelief. See Mark iv. 40, and xvi. 14. Joshua was a marvellous example of faith, when, assuredly in obedience to some direct monition from God, he said, 'Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon,' etc. (Joshua x. 12-14).

21. They could not fast while *He* was with them.

22. Christ's second explicit announcement of His death and resurrection. This time one appalling fact is foretold: His *betrayal*. What a sharp pang it costs us to find our trust misplaced, our tenderness unvalued and even wounded, and to suffer wrong and treachery at the hands of an ungrateful friend! Find allusions in the Psalms to this. One of life's stern lessons is to 'cease from man' (Isa. ii. 22). Ah! the friend may betray us; even the mother 'may forget' (Isa. xlix. 15); but *one* Friend *never* forgets, never repels our confidence, never rolls back upon us any burden that we bring to Him, even though it be a burden of sin and shame. Thank God for that Friend!

23. Well might they be 'exceeding sorry.' But how strange it seems, when the prediction of His death was fulfilled, that they utterly forgot the promise of His resurrection; all hope lost in blank disappointment, if not despair. They even used the past tense, 'We hoped that it was He,' etc. (Luke xxiv. 21), not 'we know that it was.' Had they not been, as we learn

from Mark ix. 32, 'afraid to ask Him,' He 'might have said much that would have strengthened their faith when the trial hour came.

24. This story of the tribute-money is only told by St. Matthew. The half shekel (Revised Version) here means a tax paid by every man above the age of twenty, for the maintenance of the Temple service.

25. This verse refers to a poll-tax paid to the Romans by every one enrolled in the census. Peter said 'Yes,'—meaning 'to be sure He does'; no slight proof of his faith, if he knew the bag was empty.

26. Christ's argument is this: 'If the kings of the earth do not take tribute from their children, I, the Son of God, am free from a tax for the maintenance of my Father's house.' The payment was voluntary on Christ's part, obligatory on Peter's.

27. 'Lest we should cause them to stumble.' Had Christ *not* paid it, after Peter's assurance that He did, there would have been apparent ground of offence. We must not needlessly offend; nor must we do wrong to avoid offending; either course is wrong, as extremes generally are. The coin is named in the Greek. It was about half-a-crown—the sum needed to pay the Temple tribute for two persons. There are three things to notice in this miracle; 1st, that the exact sum required was in a fish's mouth. Whence did the fish procure it? and why, if unable to swallow it, did he not drop it? 2nd, that Christ knew this very coin was in so unlikely, almost inconceivable, a place; 3rd, that this fish, and no other, came to Peter's hook. At this time, our Lord had nothing; the miracle left Him as it found Him. How sweet to know that for *our* sakes He became poor, that we, 'through His poverty, might become rich!' (2 Cor. viii. 9.)

CHAPTER XVIII.

1. MARK ix. 33 shows that this dispute amongst the disciples happened on the way to Capernaum. Jesus waited till they were in the house, and then took up the subject. Matthew

at this point introduces it. There were several things that might have suggested the inquiry : 1st, the giving of the keys to Peter ; 2nd, the Transfiguration ; 3rd, the privilege allowed to three of witnessing it. By St. Mark's account (ix. 33), we learn that Christ answered their question by asking another, which seemed to recall them to a better spirit, for they ' held their peace,' probably ashamed to answer.

2. He called a little child, so young that He took him in His arms, and held him in the midst, visible to all. Happy child ! resting in the arms of Jesus !

3. Conversion, the turning of the heart from the world and self and sin to God, is a work impossible to man ; we could as soon arrest the planets in their courses. But we can *pray*, and persevering earnest prayer for the Holy Spirit's teaching is *always* heard ; no law of nature is more certain than this. Notice the humility, simplicity, and trustfulness of little children ; they believe all things, cling gladly to a stronger hand, a wiser guiding than their own. They are towards *us* what we should be towards God.

4. See James iv. 10. Humility is, 1st, to think little of ourselves, which is comparatively easy if we have any common-sense and experience ; 2nd, to be willing that others should think little of us, which is so difficult that nothing but God's grace can effect it. See 1 Peter v. 5. What peace, what heart-rest, this brings ! First, through being last—one of the Scripture paradoxes.

5. Yes ; each child, each young or weak disciple, that you may have the opportunity of teaching or helping, is Christ's messenger sent to *you*. Will you reject the opportunity of ministering to *Him* ? (Matt. xxv. 40.)

6, 7. The word ' millstone ' has in the Greek a word added to it, signifying that it was too large to be managed by the hand, but only by the help of an ass. Water cornmills were not invented till a little before the time of Augustus ; windmills long after. The Greeks and Romans and other nations used this punishment, though the Jews did not ; the expres-

sion seems to be a proverb for utter hopeless ruin. How Christ loves His little ones ! or He never would have uttered words so terrible. We may cause them to stumble by inconsistency ; by thoughtless words that weaken a serious impression ; by worldliness ; by irritable tempers over childish faults and mishaps ; or by having just religion enough to make us uncomfortable about our sins, and not enough to cast them upon Jesus. To be uneasy about our sins is not a bad *beginning* of religion ; but if we make it a halting-place, we may never get any farther.

8, 9. See Matt. v. 29, 30. Anything that is a cause of sin must be sacrificed, however dear, or apparently profitable to our worldly interest ; but we are not to invent sacrifices and troubles for ourselves, to take up self-imposed burdens, to make victims of ourselves needlessly. Our loving Father would see us happy, and even here He gives us countless blessings. What then will heaven be ? Some early fanatics took these verses literally ; and the Romanist, like the Indian devotee, still thinks self-torture pleasing to God. It is wickedly said that those who believe the doctrine of Scripture and of the Church on everlasting punishment, wish their fellow-creatures to be eternally miserable. Never heed this taunt ; we believe it simply because we find it in God's Word, and because we know Him to be a *just* God as well as a Saviour : not extreme to mark what is done amiss, but sure to punish determined, wilful, unrepented sin.

10. Those who reared the royal children used to have familiar intercourse with the Queen, which would have been permitted to no minister of state : so doubtless our guardian angels have many an errand to the Father, Whose absent children they are tending in life's school. In that school some are just beginning their A B C, some learning far deeper lessons in His affliction-class, and others joyfully listening for His Home-call to an eternal holiday. When we see Him as He is, we shall bless Him most of all for the lessons learnt in pain and tears and anguish.

11. This was His special work ; let not our inconsistency be the cause of loss to the saved, or dim the lustre of one jewel in His crown.

12, 13. How precious the sheep are to Him ! He does not say, 'It is *but one*, enough still remain.' No ; He leaves all the rest to find that *one*, no matter how great the difficulty and peril of the search. He 'rejoiceth.' Oh ! to give Him joy Who for us bore sorrow unspeakable !

14. It is not His will that *one* should perish ; therefore, whosoever will may come, and be right dearly welcome to that Father's heart.

15. This chapter resembles a series of beautiful pictures, all different. What are they ? We have just read of Christ's love to *us* ; now we are taught our duty to each other. We must harbour no silent grudge, nor yet reprove publicly till other means have failed. That is a beautiful word, '*gained thy brother*' ; won him over to loving contrition for his fault, perhaps to a new and better life (Prov. xi. 30 ; James v. 19, 20). This command is easily reconciled with that in 1 Tim. v. 20 ; for in St. Matthew the trespass is '*against thee*,' an individual matter only. St. Paul refers to notorious sin, which for the sake of others as well as the offender must be openly reproved by him whose duty it is, and who, if silent, would almost be a partaker of it. St. Paul refers to the duty of a bishop, or some one in authority ; Christ speaks of our '*brother*.'

16, 17. If he refuse to hear, two or three witnesses may be summoned ; and if still more public censure fails, we must withdraw ourselves from him. These verses strongly illustrate the duty of avoiding everything that can hurt another ; and remember that wounds, though healed, leave scars. Especially take care never to '*hurt the hurt*.'

18. See on chap. xvi. 19.

19. This is one of Christ's promissory notes. We feel our need, we ask, and what we ask is '*done for us*,' through Christ, the living Channel of the prayer upward, the answer earthward.

20. Notice well the connecting word 'for': Christ with us, Christ *in* us, that is everything. It is not any doctrine that saves us; it is simply Christ Himself. Cleave to Him, and then you will be happy.

21. Peter had probably been rather envied by the other Apostles; besides which he might have given offence by continually answering for the rest. It was a Jewish maxim to forgive only thrice.

22. As long as needed; even seventy times seven is not the limit. See Luke xvii. 4.

23. 'Therefore,' *i.e.* in reference to this. Here we have another scene; let us try to realise it, for ere very long we shall all take part in it.

24. Talents of silver: when gold is meant, the word is always mentioned. Even in silver it was an enormous sum.

25. Like this most unhappy debtor, *we* have nothing to pay. What, nothing? No prayers, no tears of penitence, no good works, no acts of faith? No; with all these we come quite empty-handed to our God—we have nothing that would weigh one grain in His most just balance. We pray and work *because* we love Him; not to make Him love *us*. He *first* loved us. The proud heart would rather pay what it fancies it can, and let Christ make up the rest; but one touch of ours would mar it, if thrown in as part of His perfect work.

26. Piteous cry—vain promise!

27. The pitying Master liberates him—cancels the debt. How this illustrates Psalm lxxviii. 38! What would become of any of us, were not His heart the throne of pity?

28. Observe the difference in the condition of the debtor, who was not his servant, but his *fellow-servant*; and who owed only a trifling sum, equal to £3 2s. 6d.—not a vast debt hopelessly impossible to defray. Notice the difference in demeanour; his Master laid no rough hand on *him*. We can almost hear the hard tone in which he says, 'Pay what thou owest.'

29. The same action, the same words, had moved his lord's heart.

30. But nothing moved *him*, though his debtor's promise was one that might well have been kept; whereas he himself had promised an impossibility. The nether millstone is not harder than man's heart may in time become. Pharaoh is an example of this.

31. His fellow-servants would have been almost accomplices in his cruelty had they left it untold, for in all such cases secrecy is sin.

32, 33. What a lesson of tenderness for *us*!

34. In former times jailers were allowed to torture debtors to make them pay; or to constrain their friends to pay, in pity for the sufferer.

35. How we need God's forgiveness! Not seven times, nor seventy times seven; ours must be a *constant* coming to the fountain, opened for sin and for uncleanness. Blessed Jesus, Whose death unsealed that fountain!

CHAPTER XIX.

1. AN interval of six months seems to have elapsed between the previous chapter and this. The same hiatus is found in St. Mark; but St. Luke and St. John carry on the history, and tell us of Christ's revisiting Jerusalem, raising Lazarus, sending forth the seventy, delivering the pathetic parable of the prodigal son, and many other parables—healing the ten lepers, and doing other wondrous works. Many of these things took place during His fourth and last circuit in Galilee. The departure from Galilee, of which we read, was the final winding up of His work there; the Galilæans had had much of His presence, but now they were to see Him in their midst no more. Our choicest privileges here are very transient; but in heaven they will be ours 'not for a time, but for ever.'

2. None sought Him in vain; and this is as true now as ever it was.

3. The Jews allowed divorces on pretexts the most frivolous.

4. 'An help-meet for him' (Gen. ii. 20). What the daughter is, the wife will be. Marriage does not act like a

charm—it brings new duties ; it does not bring fitness for them. New trials and difficulties are sure to come ; but wisdom, and grace, and self-control, and loving forbearance, must be sought now in the practice of life's earlier, easier duties, or you will be found wanting *then*. Your lamps will have no oil, at the very moment when you should be the light of your home.

5, 6. How can a man 'cleave' to his wife, unless she has something in her to enable her to be a stay and comforter ?

7-9. Moses, as a civil governor, sanctioned this, to prevent worse cruelty to innocent wives.

10-12. Too many of Christ's sayings were not 'received,' in any profitable sense, by those who heard them.

13. Luke xviii. 15 calls them 'babes.' The disciples, however, rebuked the mothers, thinking it an intrusion on their Lord ; but He counted all alike welcome who came to Him. He is the same Saviour still—will not *you* come ?

14. There is an invaluable addition in Mark (chap. x. 14) : 'He was moved with indignation.' 'Suffer,' etc. This is true as respects the countless babes in heaven, and no less true of the childlike spirit of all who go there. What a lesson of humility to the disciples, and of encouragement to mothers in all times to bring their little ones to Him, Who says to them, 'take this child' etc. (Exod. ii. 9).

15. The mothers hoped that He would lay His hands on them, and pray ; but He did even more than this—He took them up in His arms, laying His hands upon them, and blessed them (Mark x. 16). Often does He still give more than parents ask ; but sometimes when they are entreating their child's life, He gives the life immortal.

16. The next applicant was a young ruler, irreproachable amid the snares of youth and wealth. Name some of these snares. His heart craved more than riches ; and, so eager was he, that he came running, and kneeled down in the road, then thronged with travellers to the Passover. He was no Nicodemus, deterred by false shame, or by what others might say.

Yet his question betrayed much ignorance ; the question of the Philippian jailer was a far more enlightened one (Acts xvi. 30). The young ruler evidently thought he could, in some as yet unknown way, earn, or merit, eternal life. How many resemble him !

17. 'Why,' etc. This means, 'do not class Me with other good masters. I am *the* Good One.' 'If thou wouldest enter into life eternal, keep the commandments'; *i.e.* perfectly, without flaw, which no man ever did, or can do. Christ speaks thus in reply to his own inquiry, 'What good things shall I *do* ?'

18, 19. 'Which'? *i.e.* point out any that I have broken. Christ purposely confines Himself to the second table, which the ruler, doubtless, thought it easy to obey. In Mark x. 19, 'defraud not' stands for the tenth ; else the eighth occurs twice. Fraud is often the outcome of covetousness. 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself' is not so much an eleventh commandment, as a summary of the rest. See Rom. xiii. 10.

20. This gives us a glimpse into his character—into his heart. He thought he had kept all the commandments ; yet he felt there was something lacking, or he would not have sought Christ, Who, looking upon him, loved him, seeing his frank sincerity, and nearness to the kingdom of God. See Mark x. 21. Seldom would *His* Face wear any but a loving look.

21. 'If thou,' etc. He thought he had perfectly kept the commandments ; but money was his idol. Christ knew it, and laid His great authoritative grasp on that—by no means as a general rule for others, but as a special test for *him*. Riches or heaven—either, but not both ! We have each our special treasure ; let us hold it with a clasp that can and will relax at His bidding.

22. He was deeply sorrowful ; but wealth, not Christ, was nearest his heart. Probably he would have resigned half the money ; but Christ owns no divided heart. The present enjoyment of his great possessions attracted him more than the

treasure laid up in heaven. It was a crucial test, and God will in one way or other test each of us: 'Lovest thou Me more than this?' He will say of what is dearest to us. Oh! that 'Tekel' may not be pronounced on us, as it will be if we allow anything whatever to come between us and God! Most likely the young ruler could have stood any test but this. The test of true godliness—the secret of true peace—is the entire subjugation of the will. What a struggle precedes it! 'Anything but *that*,' we say with trembling lips and passionate entreaty; till by degrees He strengthens us to add, 'Thy will be done.' And then there is a great calm, deeper than any storms of time can break. We may 'leave' some precious thing for Christ, even when He takes it from us, if our heart yields it up for His sake.

23. Mark x. 23 says, 'He looked round,' etc., as if following the departing ruler with His eyes—departing for the *last* time. 'Hardly,' i.e. with difficulty. Riches are not evil in themselves, if honestly and honourably earned: the danger lies in setting our affections on them—allowing them to make earth too attractive, too dear.

24. A proverbial expression denoting great difficulty, not, as it seems, impossibility. Mark x. 24 explains it by saying, 'how hard is it for them that *trust* in riches'! etc. Those who place no trust in them, and hold them as God's stewards, may use them nobly. Still, Agur's prayer (Prov. xxx. 7-9) points to what is most to be desired—not great wealth, but 'God and enough.' Riches are a talent: like time, health, or abilities.

25. The poor often think, 'How easy for the rich to be good'! and the Apostles, who themselves were poor, were 'astonished exceedingly' at Christ's word, and asked, 'Who, then, can be saved?'

26. None by human power, any by Divine.

27. It was true; the fisher's nets and boats were as much to them, as the young ruler's wealth to him. See Luke v. 11. Peter does not say 'I,' but 'we,' generously including his brethren.

28. Christ graciously acknowledges what they had foregone, and assigns them their reward and their place in the coming glory. The lost ten tribes are, it would seem, to be found then. See Ezekiel xlvii. and xlviii. In those glad days, 'Ephraim shall not envy Judah, and Judah shall not vex Ephraim' (Isa. xi. 13). The whole of this glorious chapter is on this subject. It is cheering to know that England, more than any other land, is a home for God's banished ones, who are still dear to Him, or He would not say, 'they shall prosper that love thee' (Psa. cxxii. 6).

29. This includes every form of self-sacrifice to which God plainly calls us.

30. These words were used by Christ to check the presumption of the Apostles. Here they are the key-note of the parable with which the next chapter opens.

CHAPTER XX.

1. GRESWELL thinks that this parable was uttered on the Friday before Passion week, seven days before He suffered. At the vintage labourers were scarce; masters went out early to secure them. Notice the word 'labourers': toil here, rest yonder. The Christian may and will be weary in his Master's service (not *of* it), but the resting-time is not yet, not here; it lies before him, and every toilsome day's march brings him nearer it.

2. This was the usual day's hire; a penny was sufficient in those times to provide daily bread for one or more persons. In England, in the fourteenth century, Parliament enacted that haymakers, etc., should have one penny a day 'without meat, drink, or other courtesy demanded.' Moreover, it was ample payment, since 'twenty-four eggs, or a hen, or even a pig, could be bought for a penny; a fat ox for six shillings and eightpence.' In Scripture a day sometimes stands for a life; 'accomplish as an hireling,' etc. (Job xiv. 6).

3, 4. The third hour, *i.e.* nine a.m.; a quarter of the day gone for ever. In human life, if we suppose that the first hour ends

when a child reaches the age of six, then the third hour will end at eighteen ; a quarter of life gone, even supposing it prolonged to seventy-two. Those who were hired after the early morning had no agreement with Him ; they trusted Him to give what was right.

5. The sixth hour, noon ; the ninth, three p. m.

6. The 'eleventh hour,' five p. m., one working hour before the close of day ; a most unusual time to engage, and a most unusual time for conversion. I have known numbers who have entered God's service in their teens, and a few between twenty and thirty, but hardly any in old age. Even if you could be sure of living to threescore years and ten, and of then turning to God, (the most unlikely of all things), how sad to offer Him no bud of fragrant promise, but autumn's withered wind-swept leaves ! Have you the heart to think of spending your best on self and the world, and giving the Saviour, Who died for you, only the dregs of a wasted life, vigour and energy gone, working-days over, opportunities for ever lost, and evil wrought that no late repentance, however bitter, can undo ? What a dreary retrospect ! Oh, do not stand all the day idle ! He is waiting to hire you this very moment. Shall He wait in vain ? turn away grieved because you *will not* come ? Shall that pierced Hand knock to no purpose ?

7. The excuse was a vain one ; they should have answered the first call. They must have heard it, as they stood there 'all the day idle.'

8. 'Even,' the reckoning-time, pointing to the day of final account ; only then the Lord Himself will give the reward.

9. Of the master's bounty they received it, not that they had earned it. God is wont to do for us more than we desire or deserve.

10. The mercenary spirit in Peter's question is here re-proved ; they had *no right* to suppose that they should have received more. Undoubtedly, in the great judgment, reward and punishment will be exactly apportioned to what we sow in this life, and in very different degrees ; but the reward will be of God's royal bounty, the punishment of man's own earning.

11. A murmuring spirit is very displeasing to God ; how the Israelites suffered for it in the wilderness ! It doubtless arose from their having so little occupation ; no sowing or reaping, no building, or planting, or road-making ; not even clothing to provide, for their ' raiment waxed not old ' (Deut. viii. 4).

12. 'The burden,' etc. : a striking description of the cares, anxieties and responsibilities of life. The young know little of them, the very old have laid them aside, and a short quiet waiting-time precedes the hush of death.

13. 'Friend,' the same word used to Judas. 'You appeal to justice, and that very appeal closes your mouth, for you have what you engaged for ; My bounty to others is no concern of yours.'

14, 15. We must never forget God's sovereignty ; that we are in His hand what clay is in the hand of the potter.

16. 'Take heed lest by murmuring you miss your own penny.' These grumblers were like the 'elder brother' in the parable. In heaven there will be special rewards for special services, but there will be no sense of loss, no want there ; the cups of joy from which those blessed ones drink will be of very different sizes, but each full to overflowing. All will be 'satisfied' there, all 'complete' in Him.'

17. Our Lord had now crossed the Jordan, probably, as Greswell thinks, at the usual ford of Bethabara. From Jericho to Jerusalem was literally an ascent—He went up to die ; the most memorable journey ever taken. Aaron went up Mount Hor, to lay aside his priestly robes and die there (Num. xx. 28) ; and Moses ascended to the top of Pisgah, to look round on the fair land of promise, and to enter the heavenly Canaan (Deut. xxxiv. 1-6). *They* went up because their work was finished, but Christ's great work was yet to be done. He went before them, and they followed, 'amazed' perhaps at His courage in going there, and 'afraid' probably for themselves (Mark x. 32-4). He went His way to death, with full knowledge of all that awaited Him ; but *our* future is mercifully veiled

from us. Our Father knows, and therefore we need not know, either the time or the circumstances of our departure.

18. This was His third announcement of His approaching sufferings.

19. But it was His first explicit statement of the share that Gentiles would have in it. He Who died for both was slain by both; though only the Jews hated Him. Pilate would gladly have released Him, had it not seemed against his own interest. He preferred being 'Cæsar's friend' to Christ's (John xix. 12, 13).

Notice the prominence given by the Evangelists to His betrayal. How sore a pang to the grieved, tender, loving heart of the 'Man of sorrows'! (Isa. liii. 3.) Observe, too, the word 'mock.' 'Cruel mockings' are well coupled with 'scourgings' (Heb. xi. 36); for 'there is that speaketh like the piercings of a sword' (Prov. xii. 18). How Gabriel must have longed to unsheathe his sword to slay the mockers! To the angel hosts the Crucifixion must have been the saddest of all sights. Had not the minds of the Apostles been full of an unsuffering Messiah, they must have understood these repeated predictions. Preconceived ideas are hard to get over.

20. Salome. See Matt. xxvii. 56, and Mark xv. 40. Doubtless her sons urged her to make the request, which was perhaps prompted by Christ's promise (Matt. xix. 28). Bloomfield says, 'That Jesus regarded them as the principals, is clear from His addressing the answer to them.' See the unwise preface to their request (Mark x. 35).

21. 'What wouldest thou?' So He says to us, when we make request unto Him. What *do* we desire when we pray? On earth John's seat was next to Christ, on Whose breast he leaned. To lie prostrate at His feet in heaven would be a good place indeed.

22. 'Ye know not,' etc. : how often might this be said to us, of prayers that we offer, with tears and yearnings unutterable, and which a wiser, truer love denies. *Trust* Him with your prayers, as with all besides. Sometimes our prayers receive

no answer, because the tenor of our lives contradicts them. We pray to be Christ's, and yet, perhaps, lead worldly lives. How gentle His reproof, 'Are ye able?' etc.

23. Whatever their faults, James and John were two blessed men. James was the first of the twelve to drink of Christ's cup, and to wear the martyr's crown; and John was longest and most sorely tried. To *him* whom Christ specially loved, He gave a natural death, together with the heroism and the glory of martyrdom, delivering him unhurt from a cauldron of boiling oil—almost as wondrous a preservation as that of Shadrach, etc. Hence, perhaps, the gentleness of Christ's reproof; or it may have been because His own heart was then so unspeakably sad. Even with men, though a passing vexation often makes them irritable, a deep heart-sorrow has the opposite effect; but there are some who have no depth at all—no capability of intense sorrow, come what may. Christ's answer means, 'Not Mine to give on a principle of favouritism, but Mine to give to them for whom it is prepared.' The petition was not denied; perhaps they are seated at His side at this moment; but their request did not further their object, nor was the principle of distribution what they thought. When John saw Him between two thieves, he must have bitterly remembered his ambitious prayer.

24. Can we wonder at it?

25-27. Admirable wisdom! calling them round Him to check the hot dispute that might have arisen. In His kingdom of grace, the true greatness is humility and devotedness of service. He that in these goes down deepest, shall rise highest.

28. See Luke xxii. 27. He is our perfect Example. See John xiii. 15, and 1 Peter ii. 21. In His glory, angels and the noblest principalities of heaven, delight to do Him service; but the Served of all came here to be the Servant of all; and His last act was the grandest Service ever beheld in God's universe. How little ministry was ever rendered Him on earth, either by men, or by the wondering angels, grieved spectators

of the sufferings He would let none of them avert. When in the death-anguish, He said, 'I thirst,' no one cared to bring Him 'a cup of cold water.' The vinegar they did give Him was offered with mockery and taunt—as we read (Mark xv. 36, and Luke xxiii. 36, 37). 'A ransom for many.' What is a ransom? 'Many' is here used, not in contrast with *few*, or *all*, but with *One*. Many sinners, but one Christ; God's 'unspeakable gift' to lost, ruined men.

29. Jericho. Mention other notices of it.

30. The slight variations in the accounts given by the Evangelists of this miracle, rather prove than disprove their truthfulness. There is simply a missing link—no real discrepancy. Two blind men were healed, one being Bartimæus; Christ may have healed one on entering Jericho, the other on leaving it. We shall carry our Scripture knowledge to heaven, and oh! how much better shall we understand what we know! Picture the scene. The poor blind men hear the footsteps, feel the waving of the garments as the crowd moves on, and ask, 'Who is it?' They are told, and seize the blessed opportunity—probably their first and last. They heard that 'Jesus of Nazareth' passed by, and they at once cry, 'Jesus, Thou Son of *David*, have mercy on us' (Mark x. 47). 'Bar,' in Syriac, means 'son'; as 'Ben' does in Hebrew. See Ben-jamin, Ben-oni. Where does this last name occur, and what does it mean? See Gen. xxxv. 18 (marg. ref.).

31. Happy are we if rebuke makes us 'cry the more' to Jesus.

32. And now Mark tells us (x. 49), kind voices say, 'Be of good cheer. Rise, He calleth thee.' 'Casting away his garment.' The words denote an eye-witness; throwing aside all hindrances. What are *ours*? Jesus stood still, pausing on His solemn journey, to help and heal; no hurry marked *His* steps. How simple and loving the question, 'What will ye?' etc.

33. How direct the answer! Be direct in *your* prayers; ask for what you feel you want—keep nothing back from Him, neither sin, nor care, nor fear, nor desire; be *specific* in your petitions.

34. 'They followed Him.' How naturally they might have longed to go home, to look on the face, perhaps of a dear wife, unseen for years, or on the innocent faces of little children, never seen before—but no ; they followed Jesus. Are *we* doing this ? Trust Him, cleave to Him ; He only can bring you safely through life's intricacies, to the land of light and peace.

CHAPTER XXI.

1. ALL the evangelists give this grand scene. The Mount of Olives was a 'Sabbath day's journey,' about three quarters of a mile, from Jerusalem. Bethphage means 'the house of figs'—fig-trees being abundant there ; it was near Bethany. 'His feet shall stand upon the Mount of Olives,' in the great day for which creation waits. Lord hasten it ! For the rest of this wonderful prophecy, see Zech. xiv. 4-21. As Balaam said (Num. xxiv. 23), 'Who shall live when God doeth this ?'

2. This direction affords one of the many minor proofs of His divinity. None of those with Him knew where the animals would be found. Only the colt is named by Mark and Luke, as being the one on which Christ rode. Mark xi. 3 adds, 'whereon never man sat.' No animal previously used was employed for any sacred purpose, even among the heathen.

3. Probably their owner was a disciple. Had Christ pleased, how easily could He have summoned a chariot of fire to bear Him to Jerusalem ! but how many loving words would then have remained unsspoken ! Moreover, His enemies would have been too much awed to condemn, and scourge, and crucify Him. 'The Lord hath need of them.' Wondrous words, and full of comfort ! How often in moments of discouragement we think, 'God has no need of *me* ; my life's work is a failure' ! In one sense, this is true—He does not need us for Himself ; but He does need us for His children, amongst whom He has placed us. Perhaps those who stood all the day idle in the market-place did not feel how useless their lives were ; but real workers sadly own how far their work

falls below their aim. Do not grow discouraged ; remember, in whatever niche God may place you, He has 'need' of you : I want you to remember this, and to draw hope and comfort from it.

4, 5. See Zech. ix. 9. 'Thy King' (Psalm ii. 6). John xii. 13 says they called Him 'the King of Israel': none had borne that title since Solomon. 'Meek.' Ah, none were ever so 'meek and lowly in heart' (Matt. xi. 29)! Yet a King such as earth never saw, and never shall see till He comes again. Luke xix. 32 adds, 'they that were sent, found even as He had said.' He had given them seven particulars : 1st. In the village over against them (Mark xi. 2) ; 2nd. As soon as they were entered (Mark xi. 2) ; 3rd. They should find an ass tied (Matt. xxi. 2) ; 4th. And a colt whereon never man sat (Mark xi. 2) ; 5th. Both animals tied (Matt. xxi. 2) ; 6th. What they should be asked when loosing them (Luke xix. 31) ; 7th. The result (Matt. xxi. 3).

6. Prompt, simple obedience ! They might have said, 'Why bring two animals, when only one is needed ? Why bring any without leave being first asked ?' Mention other instances in Scripture of ready obedience to a command, for which no reason was given. Reasons seldom are given in Scripture for specific directions : to teach us that God's simple word is enough—enough to guide, enough to rest upon.

7. Loose Eastern garments, available for such a purpose. He rode upon the colt, the mother accompanying ; both animals wore the trappings, put on to do Him honour.

8. Multitudes who had come to the Passover, now came to meet Jesus, having heard, from those Jews who went to Bethany to see Lazarus, that Christ was coming to Jerusalem. See John xii. 12, 13. 'Spread their garments' to do Him honour. See 2 Kings ix. 13. 'Branches.' John says of palm-trees—hence Palm Sunday. He tells us (verses 18 and 19) how many were drawn to meet Him by the miracle of the raising of Lazarus. Luke xix. 39, 40 tells of the displeasure of the Pharisees, who wished the Master to 'rebuke' them, and of His reply. For a similar figure, see Hab. ii. 11.

9. The multitudes both went before and followed, as in a royal procession. 'Hosanna,' *i.e.*, 'Save now,' or 'Save, we beseech Thee.' Luke xix. 38 adds the beautiful words, 'peace in heaven, and glory in the highest.' Not unlike the angel's song (Luke ii. 14). Five days later, 'Hosanna' was changed to 'crucify Him.' Well may Scripture bid us 'Cease from man' (Isaiah ii. 22). Luke xix. 41-44 gives us the next touching incident—His tears over the doomed city.

10. 'Who is this?' Naturally suggested by the advancing crowd.

11. 'The prophet,' or '*that* prophet' (Deut. xviii. 18).

12. In presenting Himself in the Temple, He fulfilled the law that the victim should be set apart four days before the day of atonement. This was another transaction of the same day. His first cleansing of the Temple took place after His baptism by John; three years of toil unspeakable intervene, and He returns to find His House of Prayer defiled just as before. Surely apparent failure should not discourage *us*, when even *His* work seemed so soon undone! Yet His holy, spotless life and teaching, His most precious death and burial, His glorious resurrection and ascension, laid the foundation of a kingdom that shall endure for ever.

13. He uses even stronger words; calling the desecrated Temple on the first occasion a 'house of merchandise' (John ii. 16). Now He calls it 'a den of robbers.' He describes it the first time as 'My Father's house'; this time it is 'My house.' 'The House of Prayer.' Thank God that His house is not the only place where prayer may be offered and accepted! It might have been so, or that we could have been heard at specified hours only. Then how dreary, and how full of peril, the intervening hours, when no help could be found for the soul's urgent, unexpected needs, and for the many pressing dangers that beset this mortal life! What a joy to know that at every moment, at all times, in all places upon earth, one word of true prayer can reach His ear and heart! No fear that our continual coming may weary Him,

for He loves to be entreated. Do we feel what a privilege this is? Would it be a grievous privation to you to be for hours together debarred from prayer? We see, in comparing the two cleansings of the Temple, that no 'scourge' was used this time. Alas! the scourge was even then ready that was to torture *Him*!

14. These miracles in the Temple court showed His Divine authority for cleansing 'His house.' Happy was it for these stricken ones that they used their one last opportunity of coming to Him! They little knew it was the last. The cursing of the fig-tree mentioned (verse 19), we are told by Mark (xi. 13), preceded the cleansing of the Temple. It is not easy to trace the exact sequence of events during the Holy week; but certainly the triumphal entry into Jerusalem was the event of the first day: the cleansing of the Temple, and the cursing of the fig-tree, probably occurred on the second day.

15, 16. They were stung by this novel testimony to Jesus. Perhaps the glad voices of the countless babes in Paradise are the sweetest there! Mark xi. 25 is a different and deeper fulfilment of the prophecy (Psa. viii. 2).

17. 'Lodged there.' Earth was but a lodging to the homeless Saviour. Jerusalem was no longer safe for Him; nor did He pass one night there from this time, till the fatal one.

18. 'He hungered.' Leave that hospitable roof at Bethany fasting! Impossible! Perhaps He had risen early, and gone unperceived, 'a great while before day,' into a solitary place to pray—as in Mark i. 35. It was real hunger, no scene to point a lesson. There was another Fig-tree, on which for three years He hungered to see fruit. How He yearned for it! See Matt. xxiii. 37.

19. The fig-tree seldom exceeds twelve feet, has many branches, large dark-green leaves, and purplish fruit; in Judæa it produces two crops of fruit in a year, and sometimes bears all the year. This tree had leaves, but no figs—figs usually came before the leaves. There are various opinions as to the meaning of this miracle. Mark xi. 13 says, 'it was not the

season of figs'; *i.e.* the time of *gathering*. Still, as the leaves were out, the fruit should have been there, had the tree borne any. He spoke to the fig-tree; yet His word did not *make* it barren—it sealed it up in its own barrenness. Is *our* religious profession 'nothing but leaves'?

20. It was no partial blight; it began to wither immediately; and before the next morning—the morning of the third day—it had dried up from the roots, and so the disciples found it. Peter traces its destruction entirely to Christ's curse (Mark xi. 21). Unlike all Christ's other miracles, this was not a miracle of blessing, but of cursing; it must evidently therefore have some higher reference.

21. No obstacle shall be able to stand against confiding childlike faith; but we must use our common sense and reason, and not ask miracles, nor expect anything for which we have no warrant to pray. God promises to supply all our need (Phil. iv. 19), but He alone can judge what we *do* need. Mountains of paganism have fallen before faith and prayer and effort; what was our own dear England nineteen centuries ago?

22. This verse is a directory for prevailing prayer; we fail because we ask expecting nothing. We shoot our arrow of prayer, and never watch its results. How much do *you* expect to receive of what you ask? How *can* a cold formal *duty* prayer bring any answer at all?

23. 'These things,' the cleansing of the Temple, etc.

24-6. 'Baptism,' etc. *i.e.*, John's mission and ministry, of which baptism was the seal. 'He spake of Me, why then did ye not receive his testimony concerning Me?' It was an inextricable dilemma, for Christ's question involved the whole matter. They did not ask 'what is truth?' but 'what shall we say?' The falsest are true to one thing, *self*.

27. No wonder they received no answer.

28. 'Two sons,' the first a type of publicans and sinners; the second of hypocritical proud Pharisees. Note each word 'Son,' not a servant, but a child, addressed by his father; 'go,

work,' religion is a practical thing; it calls not to dreamy seclusion, or luxurious repose, but to earnest energetic effort; 'to-day,' vital words, eternity hangs upon to-day; 'in My vineyard.' He cares for His labourers, 'He loves His vineyard. Are *we* working in it? and how?

29. What an unworthy answer! Yet this sinful one, after all, 'repented and went.'

30. 'I go, sir,' like the Pharisee who said, 'I thank Thee that I am not as the rest of men' (Luke xviii. 11). Yet he went not, never meant to go, a falseness more odious than any rudeness, such as he, 'say, and do not.'

31. Even now the publicans and sinners are entering the Kingdom, from which the proud Pharisees stand afar off.

32. Christ's call is here represented as given by the Baptist, who, like Noah, preached repentance. See 2 Peter ii. 5. The glimpses given us of early Bible history by St. Peter and St. Jude, are deeply interesting. Mention some facts which we learn only through these two Apostles.

33. Notice God's protecting care of His Church; the 'tower' was for the keepers who defended the vineyard from thieves and animals, especially foxes (Canticles ii. 15). What are the little foxes that spoil our religious profession? Mention some points of resemblance between believers, and the vine, and its fruit. The vine is a *tender* plant, easily hurt (Psa. lxxx. 13), so is the Christian sojourner in the 'strange land' (Psa. cxxxvii. 4), that is his transient home. Again, its fruit must be *crushed* ere it becomes wine; so he feels the heavy pressure of many trials (Acts xiv. 22. Rev. vii. 13, 14).

34-6. These verses refer to God's messengers of mercy and warning, especially the prophets; and to the treatment that they received. Mark xii. and Luke xx. give more details; and Luke v. 13, represents the lord of the vineyard as taking counsel with himself. 'What shall I do?'

37. 'Afterward He sent unto them His Son.' What a parable for those to listen to who stood around Him thirsting for His blood! 'They will reverence My Son,' this does not

imply expectation on His part, which the result disappointed ; it implies the unimaginable guilt of *not* doing so.

38, 39. 'Come let us kill Him' (see John xi. 53), and take His inheritance, which otherwise they feared to lose (John xi. 48).

40. A hard question for *them* to answer, had they at once fully seen its drift.

41. They were forced to speak their own condemnation, to predict their utter ruin ; how strong are the words 'miserably destroy those miserable men.' It would seem from Luke xx. 16, that some who heard the closing words, and that the vineyard should be given to others, seized the true meaning of the parable, for they said, 'God forbid.'

42. Christ is the Corner-stone ; we find Him thus named in Isa. xxviii. 16, Eph. ii. 20, 1 Peter ii. 6. Were He either all human, or all Divine, what would have become of our lost race ? He must be Divine to save us, and human to die for us, therefore the Godhead put on mortality.

43. England has long been the favoured nation of the earth ; but if semi-popery continues to spread, who can tell what desolation may follow ?

44. An emblem of utter destruction.

45, 46. His teaching and His miracles alike enraged them. They watched their opportunity to slay Him, when it could be done with safety to themselves.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE third day of the Holy Week, it is thought, is described not only in part of the previous chapter, but in this and the three subsequent chapters.

1. Only Matthew gives this parable. What is the difference between a parable and a fable ? A fable is the channel conveying a moral lesson ; a parable, a Divine one. Bloomfield says 'this parable was partly historical, partly prophetic.'

2. In the former chapter, the parable of the vineyard is an Old Testament parable ; Christ the last and chief Prophet. In

that parable He was the householder's Son, in this, He appears in His true dignity as the King's Son. Mention the differences and resemblances between the two ; in the former God demands, in the latter He gives ; the two complete each other. What does He demand and give in our case ? Marriage-feasts lasted several days. See Judges xiv. 10-12. 'The bride, the Lamb's wife' (Rev. xxi. 9). Mention similar texts. Christ's love for His Church is unfathomable in its unselfishness, its entire, enduring perfection ; but though we can comprehend it so imperfectly, the little that we do know of it is certain. We may stake our all upon His faithfulness.

3. The Bride does not come into this parable, its design is a different one. The Jews had been 'bidden' by 'the goodly fellowship of the prophets,' age after age ; more recently by John the Baptist, by 'the glorious company of the Apostles,' by Christ Himself. Yet 'they would not come.' Brief simple words, a little child can read them, yet words of awful doom. 'I would not come,' is the sentence that every impenitent sinner will write against himself to all eternity ! None will say 'I could not.'

4. 'Other servants.' This probably refers to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and the wonderful labours of the Apostles afterwards. 'All things are ready,' but our hearts ; are *they* listening to the call ?

5. This represents the indifferent class, a very large one. Indifference is even more to be dreaded than hostility. Saul of Tarsus, Christ's open enemy, shed his blood for that same Jesus whom he once blasphemed ; but how will it be with those who 'care for none of these things,' who hear and heed not, to whom His matchless love is *nothing* ? Their lawful business was no excuse for them.

6. These were the actively hostile, but the doom which befel those who 'made light of it,' was as severe as theirs. The hostile formed a much smaller class.

7. Both alike 'perished for ever,' to use the expressive last words of Balaam (Num. xxiv. 24). 'His armies': the Roman

legions at the siege of Jerusalem. These heathen troops had never heard of Him, yet they were '*His* armies,' sent by Him to fulfil this very word. So, in Isaiah x. 5, the Assyrian is styled the 'rod of His anger.' All these were acting out their own plans, with no conscious guiding whatever except the ruler's will; but they fulfilled God's purposes, just as the storm-vexed waters of the deluge did.

8. None of us are 'worthy' in the sense of deserving reward for our merit. *From God* we merit nothing; but from *man* we may, and ought to do. In this secondary sense we find the Apostles commanded (Matt. x. 11), to inquire who in any town was 'worthy,' *i.e.* entitled to an Apostolic visit. Acts xiii. 46, shows that all places did not deserve such a privilege. Rejection proves unworthiness; 'they would not come.'

9, 10. 'As many as ye shall find, bid.' 'Many are called'; so Luke xiv. 16. Cannot *you* invite some? Your Saviour bids you try. All, *all* are welcome, whatever their past history, if only they will come *now*. Ask yourselves seriously this night, '*Have I come to Christ?*' 'Bad and good,' *i.e.* making no distinctions. It is as common in the East for a rich man to entertain the poor and afflicted, as it is in England for a wealthy man to entertain the wealthy. This is done in hot countries, partly because no meat will keep, but must be finished at once, and partly from a superstitious hope of gaining some blessing by it. Charity is not charity, nor likely to profit the donor, if selfishness be the motive.

11. 'The king came in.' This is the principal incident of the parable. Can *we* stand His inspection of each of *us*, as one by one He looks straight down into our hearts? It is a solemn question, for Oh! how much sin lurks there! At Eastern weddings the entertainer clothed his guests; so Christ clothes us with the robe of His righteousness. Zeph. i. 7, 8, refers to this custom.

12. The guests came as they were, in their own apparel, but changed it on their arrival for the garments given them. We must *come* as we are, but not *remain* as we are. He might well

be speechless, the insult was a grievous one. 'Friend,' here only means companion.

13, 14. 'Outer darkness.' Within was light and brightness—but not for *him*; he might have been there, but no second invitation would ever reach him. Oh! what must it be to be rejected from the portals of heaven! Some will be *just* lost, very near the kingdom, but not in it, not of it. Like the rich man, they may catch faint, distant glimpses of white robes and glittering crowns, in that Palace Home where God's living jewels shine with surpassing lustre; for *them*, poor forlorn outcasts, is reserved only 'the blackness of darkness for ever' (Jude 13). Undying memory will dwell for all eternity on that day when they *all but* gave themselves to Christ; but some companion sneered, Satan whispered 'to-morrow,' and the golden moment passed for evermore. 'The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and I am not saved' (Jer. viii. 20). May such words never pass *our* lips.

15, 16. The Herodians, supporters of Herod's dynasty, were a political rather than a religious sect. The Pharisees opposed them on other occasions, but willingly united with them to entangle Christ. Notice the flattery with which they presumed to approach Him—most of us are caught by flattering words. *Always* distrust a flatterer, he has some selfish object to gain. What is it to regard the person of men? See James ii. 1-4.

17. To say 'Yes,' would offend the Roman-ruled Jews; to say 'No,' would be contrary to the decrees of Cæsar.

18-20. The origin of stamps on coins is attributed to the Persians. Whose superscription do *we* bear? Whose name is on our brow? Not unfrequently God's children bear the visible impress of His peace, a holy calm that comes only from close communion with Him; a something that makes us 'take knowledge of them that they have been with Jesus.' Why do lines of anxiety, or fretfulness, or temper, on our foreheads, or traces of self-borne care, so often hide this mark? In all cases we fail to see it in ourselves, none ever beheld it in a mirror.

It will be one of heaven's joys to trace it on every one we meet, as well as on the dear remembered faces,

'That we have loved long since, and lost awhile.'

21, 22. To this unexpected reply, no answer was possible. By this decision Cæsar was satisfied, God glorified, the people edified.

23. The Sadducees were the richest, and the most irreligious Jewish sect. They believed in no resurrection, no immortality after death, no angel, nor spirit; they thought that death ended everything. To us, each life is the opening chapter of a mysterious history; to them it was a blank leaf, to be flung away, and never sought, or found, or cared for. What would life be if earth were *all* / if our destiny were ending instead of beginning, when we close our tired eyes in death! How inexplicable life's problems, were there no world to come, in which we shall no longer 'see in a mirror darkly,' and know only 'in part' (1 Cor. xiii. 12). Job, one of the oldest books in the Bible, gives one of the clearest prophecies of the resurrection (chapter xix. 25-27). The Sadducees received only the Pentateuch; hence the references to Moses.

24. Births, marriages, and deaths, are the three leading events in the history of mankind, round which our deepest earthly interests centre.

25, 26. Strange story of a life! so many marriages, so little tranquillity, one great disappointment overshadowing all. The book of Ruth throws much light on this subject.

27. 'After them all.' There comes an end to everything. She may almost have thought that death had forgotten her; but he never forgets. How briefly it is told! How few words will one day suffice to tell of *our* death! Yet some of us may feel it hard to realise it for ourselves; harder still, to believe that in such or such a number of years, no one upon earth will know that we ever lived. Yet then, long after then, the good or evil that we are doing, perhaps to-day, will be working still. Who can say how or where? Even the long, long lives of the

patriarchs before the flood, closed just as ours do. Genesis v. sums up every history but one with the words 'and he died.' See also Exod. i. 6. Where shall *we* be when like words are spoken of *us*?

28. The Sadducees thought this question would show the doctrine of the resurrection to be untenable.

29. It was their not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God, before which a thousand such difficulties vanish, that led to their error.

30. The 'family in heaven' (Eph. iii. 15), increases as each new-born spirit enters its rest, and is welcomed with a deeper gladness than that which greets the birth of a monarch's heir. *He* is born to many uncertainties of joy and certainties of sorrow, but the ransomed spirit is for ever safe, and blessed beyond all thought. Luke xx. 35, 36, throws full light upon the subject. Oh, to be 'accounted worthy' of all that bliss! *How can we be?* Heaven is filling day by day, for none who go there leave it; '*yet there is room*' for *us*! Press on—press on! Luke xx. 37 calls believers 'Sons of the resurrection'—a name given nowhere else.

31, 32. None die unto God. Our dead die to *us*. We long and yearn for them, our hearts go out after them; but there comes neither voice nor token, because to us they are 'the dead'; but with God they are alive. 'I am the God of Abraham,' etc. (Exod. iii. 6). Had Abraham ceased to be, God would have said '*I was,*' for 'He is not a God of the dead, but of the living' (Luke xx. 38). Heb. xi. gives many precious glimpses of the glory yet to come.

33. Astonished at the way in which He spoke of the invisible world, as One Who intimately knew it.

34-36. One of the Scribes, a lawyer, asks the last question put to Jesus on this occasion. He seems to have been no mere caviller, or Christ would either not have answered him, or have added some reproof while answering.

37, 38. Had the law consisted in deeds, no one word would have expressed the whole of it, and this is the only word that

will do so. We must fear, obey, trust, and hope in God ; but none of these words embrace the whole. Why not ? Show how the first four commandments are all included in this one word 'love.'

39. *As thyself* ; therefore *not* with the whole heart, mind, soul and strength. *As thyself*. Only in certain very rare instances are we required to love another *better* than ourselves.

40. Enclosed as seeds within a seed-vessel. Notice how the second of these two commandments includes the six last of the ten. (For fuller details see Mark xii. 32-34.) 'Not far from the kingdom of God,' may be said of many ; but to be *almost saved* is to be lost.

41, 42. How it must have thrilled the listening disciples to hear this ! 'What think *ye* of Christ ?' Oh, vital question ! Ask yourselves solemnly, 'What is He to *me* ?' Is He a living power in my heart ? Is He 'all my salvation and all my desire ?' the *first* in my thoughts ? If not, who or what is ? Remember how He loves you, how patiently He seeks your love ! Amid the adoring songs of seraphim, He is listening for your answer.

43-46. The lower and higher nature of Christ explains this. In one aspect we see the Man of Sorrows, worn, weary, hungered, athirst, sleeping in the storm-tossed vessel ; betrayed, scourged, crucified, laid in the grave. In the other, we behold the Son of God, speaking as never man spake, bearing for us the wrath of His Father, triumphing over death and hell, opening the gate of heaven to all believers ; and all this for *us* if we are His, if we love Him Who first loved us.

CHAPTER XXIII.

1, 2. **THEY** stood to read, and sat to expound (Luke iv. 16-20).

3. 'Therefore.' This word is important ; it means observe all that accords with the law of Moses, Christ does not enforce everything that they taught. Mark and Luke bid us beware of them ; only Matthew enjoins respect for them, showing that his Gospel was specially written for the Jews.

Mark vii. 3, amongst other passages, indicates that *he* wrote chiefly for Gentiles ; the Jews did not need the information this verse conveys.

4. 'Heavy burdens' ; *i.e.* traditions (Luke xi. 46).

5. A man's object in life tells us what he is ; the aim of the Pharisees was to be seen of men. Such are not God's children : outside religion is worse than total ignorance. Phylacteries were texts written on strips of parchment, fastened to the forehead, arm, or side, in time of prayer ; some wore them very broad, to appear more than usually devout.

6. Human nature covets them still.

7. The re-iteration of titles is pleasing to man's vanity ; but how empty they all sound when a long roll-call of them is pronounced over some great man's coffin !

8-10. Christ would not have His disciples masters, but ministers (2 Cor. i. 24 ; 1 Peter v. 3). The angel (Rev. xix. 10) calls himself John's fellow-servant. 'One is your Master.' We are in covenant with Him. An earthly employer covenants to give his servants food, lodging, and wages ; and a *good* considerate master gives more than this—kindness, protection, and real regard for their welfare. On their part, the servants covenant to perform certain duties in return ; and they, too, often give more than this—in watchful care for their master's interests ; in affection for his family ; in willing extra service in sickness or sorrow. If Christ be our Master, He will provide us with all we need in life's long journey ; everything really needed will come at the right moment. 'Remember, Christian, thou art at thy Heavenly Father's finding.*' If He is our Master, we shall try to please Him—we shall *study* His will in all things. The grand mistake of the present day is trying to serve two masters—God and the world. People say, 'If we may play chess, why not cards ? if we may go to a concert, why not to an opera ?' and so the thin end of the wedge is driven in farther continually.

11. Christ's example shows us the dignity and honour of

* Gurnall.

true service. He, the greatest of all, was the Servant of all. What a ministry His was! See Matt. xx. 28.

12. Christ repeated this saying three times (Luke xiv. 11 ; Luke xviii. 14). Give instances proving the truth of this, both from the Old and New Testament.

13. There were eight blessings uttered on the Mount ; for Matt. v. 11 is only a repetition of verse 10 in fuller detail. In *this* chapter there are eight woes, beginning verse 13. 'Shut,' etc. In Luke xi. 52, this is described as taking away 'the key of knowledge.'

14. Very devout Jews are said to have prayed for nine hours a day. Happily the humblest work done for God is worship also : a great help to devotion, but never a *substitute* for it. 'Prayer is the Christian's vital breath' ; he *cannot, will* not, dispense with it, even for a day.

15. 'Proselyte' ; *i.e.* from the heathen. 'Son of hell' : a Hebraism, denoting character. So 'children of light,' or sons of light—a term used twice in the Gospels, twice in St. Paul's Epistles. Find the passages referred to.

16. This, and the six following verses, treat of oaths. 'Gold' ; *i.e.* dedicated money, which the Pharisees would be very unwilling to give up ; therefore they attached more sanctity to it than to the Temple itself.

17. How clear this reasoning ! No one dared to interrupt Him, or answer it.

18, 19. 'Gift' ; *i.e.* offering. May we not learn, from the repetition of verse 17, how mistaken may be *our* estimate of ourselves ? The Pharisees thought themselves the very fountain of wisdom ; yet were they 'fools, and blind.' God's estimate of us differs much from man's estimate, and our own estimate of ourselves differs from both ; but His is the only true one. We know our own characters very imperfectly, and often shut our eyes to what we *might* see. Others know still less of us ; for it is only now and then that our inner life—our real self—is unveiled. Surely we should examine ourselves more, and judge others more gently—not knowing that what

we judge harshly in them is sometimes the unconscious revelation of a hidden wound.

20-22. See Matt. v. 33-37.

23. Jews were only required to pay tithe of what constituted part of their income. Christ does not blame small observances, but the omission of great duties. How solemn the thought of our sins of omission—the word we *might* have spoken for our Master ; the help we *could* have given if we would ; the loving sympathy that we withheld ; the influence for good that we could have used, but the golden unreturning opportunity passed !

24. The camel was the largest animal known to the Jews, the gnat, the smallest insect. 'Strain out a gnat.' The Jews strained their wine on account of the prevalence of insects.

25, 26. Outside religion again : often the full cup runs over, and there is a startling revelation of the poison within. More commonly the outside is reputable to the last in the eyes of men ; but the heart, which is the real man, is unclean, unclean—no Saviour there, no indwelling Spirit.

27, 28. Another figure, teaching the same truth. The Jews were ordered in the Talmud to whitewash the tombs before the month Adar (February, and part of March) : the month designed by Haman as the period for the slaughter of the Jews. Whilst the rich beautified their family sepulchres at lavish cost, those of the poor were often so neglected that a fallen tombstone lay on the ground, none caring to replace it ; so that the grave became, as we read (Luke xi. 44), a grave that appeared not. It is saddening to see an utterly neglected grave, and to read on the headstone that a mother lies there. Did she fail in her sacred duties ? or are her loving cares all forgotten ? Surely even children at the antipodes could, in almost every case, make the small payment which would ensure a perpetuity of care, till the frail body has peacefully crumbled into dust !

29-31. Pretending to mourn the sins of their forefathers, yet killing Christ ! They forgave the dead prophets, who did

not wound their pride, or interfere with their vices, as Christ did. A Rabbi was praised by one of his disciples for adorning the sepulchre—not only of Abraham, but of Adam! In that man's Biblical knowledge, the Deluge could have had no place. Herod the Great beautified the royal tombs. Even in the days of St. Jerome many tombs remained in Judæa, which had been erected long after the death of those who lay there.

32. Benson and others regard this as a kind of ironical permission : as if it said, 'I contend with you no longer ; I leave you to yourselves.' The most awful state to be left in is to be given up, left alone—a foundering vessel, from which all are fled. 'Fill ye up, then,' etc. How fearful a sentence, had they understood it! So early in Sacred History as Genesis xv., the state of the Canaanites is thus described. 'The iniquity of the Amorites' (one of the seven nations of Canaan) 'is not yet full.' When it *was* full, the deluge of wrath swept over the guilty sin-stained land. Haman's iniquity was not full till he had erected the gallows for Mordecai ; and so provoked the king's most just decree, 'Hang him thereon' (Esther vii. 9). The awful state of morals in France before the first Revolution, and many other events in history, afford other instances of God's long-suffering, followed by terrible judgment. Give instances of this, either from sacred or profane history.

33. Just such words were spoken by the Baptist (Luke iii. 7). What discouragements had even Christ in His work! Judging by appearances He left the masses just as He found them. Yet there was much deep underground work, much silent dropping of precious seed that one day brought a glorious harvest. He had set up His kingdom in many a heart, and had trained those who trained countless others, and through them the blessed teaching came to *us*.

34. 'Prophets' in the New Testament sense ; many prophecies penned by the Apostles are yet unfulfilled. Give instances of this.

35. No fewer than twelve persons are mentioned in Smith's

invaluable 'Dictionary of the Bible,' as called Zachariah, Zacharias, or Zechariah, the same name variously spelt, and meaning 'remembered by Jehovah.' Name the three principal men thus called. How awful the cumulative guilt of all the righteous blood shed upon the earth ! There is no injustice in visiting the sins of many generations upon one, the guiltiest of all. Where does God warn us in the books of Exodus and Deuteronomy that He will do this ? No nation or race ever suffers more than its own actual guilt has abundantly incurred ; if God dealt with men according to their deserts ! The sins of the antediluvians, only during the time that Noah was building the ark, amply deserved the deluge. God's justice can well vindicate itself.

36. No individual would be chargeable for any sins but his own ; though as regards temporal penalties, the sins of many would be visited on one, as in the case of Louis XVI. It may startle us to read of little innocent children perishing with their wicked parents ; but how much better for them to be carried home in a loving angel's arms, than to live to imitate the depravity amidst which they would have been reared !

37. Exquisitely tender words. How complete is the well-being of the helpless brood under the mother's wing ! they have warmth, comfort, rest, protection ; and the hen, at other times so timid, will dare anything for its young. 'He shall cover thee with His feathers' (Psa. xci. 4). What may *we* find there ? Why do we so often wander from Him ? This verse (37) contains Gospel truth enough for the saving of a soul, if written by the Holy Spirit on the heart. He loved Jerusalem, not for its worthiness, but in spite of all its sins. How this encourages us to believe that, in spite of everything, He loves *us too* ! Believe it and be happy. He loves you, not in the mass, but individually ; and when He has safely led you one by one through life's mazes to the Father's House, He will give *each* a special welcome, 'My ransomed child, thou art come home at last !' But there is an awful possibility of forfeiting all this, for He adds, '*ye would not.*'

38. *Your house, i.e. the Temple ; once it was 'My house,' or 'My Father's house.'* Desolate indeed it was, when *He* left it, to return no more.

39. These were the very last words He uttered within its precincts. How little His hearers knew this ! How little do *we* know when our day of grace may close !

CHAPTER XXIV.

1. JESUS departed from the Temple, to re-enter it no more at all ; its day was past for ever. Showing Him the buildings, of course, means calling His attention to them. Luke xxi. 5 speaks of the gifts with which it was adorned. As we suspend in our cathedrals torn crumbling banners won in some great victory, and as the heathen warriors dedicated to their gods some of the spoils of war, so the Jews hung up rich gifts and offerings in the Temple. Mark xiii. 1 mentions that *one* of the disciples made the remark, wondering how the ruin implied in verse 38 of the preceding chapter could overtake such a building. Josephus speaks of white marble pillars made of one stone, twenty-five cubits high.

2. Modern discoveries, which are of an ever-increasing interest, prove this fully. The Jewish writers themselves acknowledge that Terentius Rufus, left in command of the Roman army, tore up the foundations of the Temple with a ploughshare.

3. On the way from Jerusalem to Bethany He would cross the Mount of Olives. Mark xiii. 3 names those who asked the questions. This chapter, the most difficult in the four Gospels, is a double prophecy, recorded by Matthew, Mark, and Luke. The disciples evidently thought that the destruction of Jerusalem, Christ's coming, and the end of the world would be simultaneous.

4, 5. False Christs are a sign of the latter days.

6. There were three Roman Emperors only between the time of Tiberius, in the sixteenth year of whose reign Christ was crucified, and the destruction of Jerusalem. The two first menaced the Jews with war ; their names were Caius (or

Caligula) and Claudius. The assassination of Caius, and the timely submission of the Jews to Claudius, averted war, and Nero carried it into effect.* Neither this war nor the previous rumours of wars were to trouble the Apostles; the end was not yet.

7. 'Famines and earthquakes.' See Acts xi. 28. This famine is mentioned by Tacitus and others. Mention other famines in Scripture; also pestilences and earthquakes. Luke xxi. 11 adds another portent. In explanation of this last, Tacitus and Josephus say that, at the beginning of the siege of Jerusalem, the air was seen one sunset to be full of chariots and armed hosts. About the same time, the priests, whose duty it was to visit the inner Temple in the night, are said to have heard a noise, a movement, and the words 'Let us depart hence.'

8. If these are 'the beginning,' what shall the end be?

9. Abundantly fulfilled in the Acts. Mark xiii. 9 and Luke xxi. 12 give fuller details of stripes and imprisonment; and add a command not to premeditate the answer to accusations, and a promise that words would be given to them. The more closely we observe, the more we shall admire the wisdom with which in after days they spoke before kings and councils and rulers.

10. Foretold in Matthew xiii. 21. Here also Mark and Luke enter more into detail, and Luke xxi. 18 adds, 'Not an hair of your head shall perish,' a proverbial expression denoting perfect safety. The outward man might perish, yet they should be safe, and should realise the *sense* of safety. In their patience they were to possess their souls.

11. 'False prophets'; *i.e.* teachers, of whom many arose in Apostolic times.

12 'The love of the many,' the majority, 'wax cold,' for evidence of this see the Epistle of James, written about the period to which Christ referred, and the Epistles to the Seven Churches.

* The three brief reigns of Galba, Otho, and Vitellius, who only lived a few weeks or months after their accession, are not counted here.

13. This is the text, 'Patient continuance in well-doing'; not merely beginning well, but holding fast to the end; *cleaving* to Christ through joy and sorrow, through evil report and good report. Are *we* stedfast in the faith, rooted and grounded in it? 'Shall be saved': many interpret this of the siege of Jerusalem, and the safety of the Christians who fled to Pella in obedience to the command in verse 16 of this chapter.

14. 'For a testimony.' Not that the whole world should be converted. The Gospel was preached throughout the Roman Empire before the first fulfilment of this prophecy. Its second and universal fulfilment cannot now be very far off. May God hasten the time when the whole creation shall no longer 'groan and travail in pain together' (Rom. viii. 22). What is *our* share in this great work? Can we say 'Amen, come Lord Jesus'?

15. See Daniel ix. 26, 27. 'The abomination,' etc.; i.e. the Roman eagles, surrounding the holy city. Greswell says, that the short siege of Cestius Gallus, president of Syria, A.D. 66, from which he suddenly withdrew when he could easily have taken the city, seems to have occurred simply as a warning to the Christians to fly, which they did. 'Let him that readeth,' etc. The Holy Spirit's light must shine on the Word, or we can never savingly understand it. 'Understandest *thou* what thou readest?' (Acts viii. 30.)

16. By 'the mountains' must be understood the countries east of Jordan. Some fled into Peræa, some to Mount Libanus.

17. Instant flight. He who tarried to save his valuables, would perish with them. All must be left behind, as in the case of Lot, who entered the guilty city a rich and prosperous man, and left it bereft of all save life, and that miraculously preserved.

18. Luke xxi. 22 adds the solemn words, 'These are days of vengeance,' etc. Oh, will you not seek your loving Saviour in this the day of mercy?

19. *i.e.* Alas ! for the greater suffering involved !

20. This verse is a strong argument for prayer, and for very definite prayer ; not couched in general terms, applicable to all occasions. I have marvelled a thousand times at the wondrous minuteness of God's care ; at the way in which He times things for us in answer to prayer. It is His own appointed channel of help and blessing ; without it we perish. They were to pray against a winter flight, on account of the increased hardship it would entail. If they fled immediately on the defeat of Gallus, it would be in October, one of their mildest months. 'A Sabbath day's journey' was only about five or six furlongs.

21. 'Great tribulation' ; *i.e.* winnowing. Josephus says, 'All the calamities which had befallen any nation from the beginning of the world, were but small in comparison with those of the Jews.'

22. Happily, the days were to be shortened, or the whole nation might have perished. The conduct of the Jews themselves hastened their destruction, by the frenzy with which they fought each other, and burnt their stores of corn which might have lasted them many years. Titus himself, when viewing the fortifications of the conquered city, said that it could never have been taken by human means ; and believed that God had interposed on the side of the Romans. These verses have evidently a double prophecy ; and our hearts, that cannot but shrink from any coming trouble, take comfort in the thought that the last great tribulation will be shortened for the children's sake. We shall never be *too* sorely tried.

Luke *xxi.* 24 gives fuller details, describing the state of the Jewish nation for eighteen centuries. The land was sold, and though the Jews are now abundantly rich enough to buy it, they refuse to do so, and say, 'Why should we buy it ? The land is our own.'

23, 24. See on verse 5. 'If possible' ; precious clause !

25. None of these things were to take them by surprise.

26, 27. It was to be no hidden coming, but a bright, sudden,

universal manifestation of His glory. Lord, hasten the time for which many hearts are yearning!

28. The Roman eagles.

29. This and the following verses refer to days yet to come, just preceding the Second Advent. Luke xxi. 25, 26 gives further details. See also Rev. vi. 12-17.

30. None can tell us what this 'sign' may be, but it is evidently something distinct from Himself. Everything seems ripe for it: prophetic announcements fulfilled; the Pope calling himself God; the hard struggle with infidelity close at hand; the world's highways thrown open; much knowledge, little *love*; more need than ever of Christ's own question (Luke xviii. 8), 'When the Son of Man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?'

31. 'The reapers are the angels.' The Jews used to assemble at the soft sound of a trumpet, as we do at the ringing of church bells. In times of calamity or war it was sounded loud. When God was about to give the law to Moses (Exod. xix. 16), there were thunders and lightning, 'and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud, so that all the people trembled.'

32, 33. Having spoken of the signs preceding the two grand events concerning which the Apostles had inquired, He now speaks of the time of their occurrence, beginning with an illustration drawn from common life. His higher teaching usually started from something simple and familiar. Name examples of this.

34. In this verse He answers their first question. The destruction of Jerusalem took place within forty years.

35. Whatever may change within or around us, God's Word abideth ever—our *sure* standpoint. Hold fast to it, as you value your souls. A ship that has lost its rudder in a storm, *may* drift into some safe anchorage; but there is *no* haven for a soul that has lost faith in God's holy Word.

36. In this verse He refers to their second inquiry, which each passing day makes more momentous, as the time draws nearer. How shall we best prepare for it? May we watch

and pray, looking for His appearing ; so occupying our talent till He comes, that we may have nothing to do but to lay down our work and go to Him !

37, 38. This refers, not to the wickedness of those whom the flood destroyed, but to their worldliness, their unpreparedness, notwithstanding the ample warning they had received, and the long-suffering of God waiting 120 years while the ark was preparing (Gen. vi. 3 ; 1 Peter iii. 20).

39. They 'knew not.' Yet what premonitions they had had : Noah's preaching ; the sight of the ark ; the miraculous gathering together of the animals as they entered it ; the vast stores of food laid up—food, too, for the carnivora that must by no means prey on one another in the ark, or upon the weaker animals. All this failed to convince them till the awful moment came, when 'the windows of heaven were opened, the fountains of the great deep broken up,' and hope was at an end for ever.

40, 41. The children of light and darkness blended to the last.

42. Mark xiii. 34-36 illustrates this more fully. 'To each one his work.' Blessed thought Who it is that assigns to each of us our part in life, so that everything given us to do is 'a thought of God' for us.

43. Another illustration from common life.

44. Even after long illness death is often sudden.

45-47. We are all servants in charge, and he serves Him best who says to himself morning by morning, 'I must have my heart, my work in order ; He may come to-day.' Blessed servant ! toil ended, care and grief forgotten in the Master's smile ! Will He smile on *me* ? Ask your own hearts this question.

48, 49. The unfaithful one ; untrue in everything ; his task undone ; his trust abused ; the all-penetrating Eye upon him for ever !

50. Our Master is surely coming. Will He find us glad to open to Him immediately, or trembling at His approach ?

51. 'Cut him asunder': a punishment sometimes used in the East (Heb. xi. 37). The lesson of this parable is conveyed in one solemn word—'Watch.' Am *I* watching against foes without, and traitor thoughts within? or am I sleeping at my post? None of us are more than half awake, or we should think far less of earth, far more of heaven. This brief life is only a fleeting shadow, but its issues are eternal; and, after inconceivable myriads of years, there will still be Eternity to come. Look at those beautiful woods that lie before us, and imagine that only one leaf falls in a thousand years! How long it would be ere the *last* fall, supposing no fresh ones come! Yet it *would* fall, after millions of centuries that no thought can follow; and even *then* we shall be reaping in Eternity what we sow in Time. These are mighty issues. O Jesus, Master, make us Thy faithful servants *now*!

CHAPTER XXV.

THIS chapter gives us Christ's two last parables, and His grand description of the judgment of the nations.

1. The parable of the Virgins continues the lesson of the previous one, putting it in a new light, and still enforcing the necessity of vigilance. The duty of the virgin attendants of the bride (who does not herself appear, either in this parable or in that of the Marriage Supper) was to go forth to meet the bridegroom. They took their lamps, Jewish marriages usually taking place in an evening. Psalm xlv. 14, 15 gives a vivid picture of wedding festivities.

2. They are not described as good and bad, but as wise and foolish; as in Matt. vii. 24-27. There are many instructive side-lights in Scripture; and one of these shows us that folly, even if it fails to lead to actual sin, may be just as ruinous. To go to meet the bridegroom, lamp in hand, looked like some outward indication of good; but it availed nothing—'the door was shut' against them as firmly as if they had never joined the procession.

3, 4. In these days most people profess to be religious, how-

ever worldly their lives ; for the old landmarks are all gone, and there now seems hardly any boundary-line between the Church and the world. Everybody carries a lamp ; but where is the oil—the spiritual life—the quickening influence of the indwelling Spirit ? ‘No oil’ in this parable means the same thing as ‘no deepness of earth’ in another—a little more than mere external profession ; for there was oil *once*, or the lamps could not have gone out. *Almost* saved, *near* the kingdom, but never in it ; probably believing to the very last that all would be right. What an unfathomable depth of agonizing disappointment to find *the door shut* ! O merciful Lord, save us from this unutterable shame and anguish !

5. Christ tarries till ‘the fulness of the time’ for His second coming, just as He did for the first. How many believing generations lived on the hope of Messiah’s birth, but never saw it, nor imagined how He would come, though foretold in the plainest words !

6. He will come ‘as a thief in the night’ (1 Thess. v. 2) ; but the thief comes for that which is another’s—He cometh for His own.

7. Up to the very last all seem alike.

8. ‘Going out’ ! At what a moment ! So does the hope of the hypocrite, or of the thoughtless professor, go out in ‘the blackness of darkness for ever’ (Jude 13). What can be more awful ? How vain the appeal to those who had had the wisdom to bring oil in their vessels !

9. The wise had none to spare ; had they divided it with the others, all would have been undone. What is divinely given cannot be imparted by one to another. ‘Buy for yourselves.’ Had they applied in time, they would have found the promise true (Isa. lv. 1).

10. Alas ! they were too late ; they saw their folly, tried to repair it, but ‘the door was shut’—*fast* shut by the same Hand that closed the door of the ark against a drowning world. What an awful thought it is that we may reach the very gate of heaven, and thence be thrust down to hell—*almost* saved, yet lost !

11. Piteous cry ! Once He would have heard it gladly.

12. To 'know' here means own, approve, love. Why were unworthy guests admitted to the marriage supper, and excluded here ? Because the former parable refers to the visible Church, where good and bad mingle ; the latter to the Church triumphant, where nothing that defileth can ever enter (Rev. xxi. 27). Will *you* be there ? shall *I* ?

13. See Matt. xxiv. 42.

14. The preceding parable describes chiefly the inward life ; this dwells on active service which is valuable only when it springs from life within. Some of the differences between this parable and that of the Pounds, in Luke xix., are these : the latter was addressed to the multitude, the former to the disciples. In the parable of the Pounds each receives *one* ; in that of the Talents they receive respectively five, two, and one, and make them ten and four, thus showing equal fidelity with unequal gifts. In St. Luke, one man makes his talent, or pound, ten, another five, showing different degrees of improvement of the same advantages, with proportionate rewards. Both parables show that all gifts come from God (John iii. 27) ; and both represent the Lord as absent for a season. *How* can He be absent when He is not far from each one of us ?

15. 'According to his several ability.' This implies that the talents were not the ability itself ; the power to use talent is a separate and special gift, here called 'ability.'

16, 17. They 'traded' ; *i.e.* wrought with the talents bestowed, and so multiplied them : just as innate talent for any art may be doubled by cultivation, which adds practised skill to natural ability, besides drawing out the talent itself.

18. He is not said to have lost or destroyed it, or done any harm with it ; he simply made *no use* of it.

19. 'After a long time.' Looking forward to life it does seem long, though, as we pass through it, 'we spend our years as a tale that is told' (Psa. xc. 9). Looked back upon in Eternity, it will seem to have passed like a dream, but for its enduring results. The reckoning awaits everyone of us ; how

solemn the thought of it ! We know not *how* every part of our outer and inner life will be revealed in that awful hour ; but, in some marvellous way, our whole lives are, as it were, photographed by unseen agency day by day till life ends ; and, in the final reckoning, the whole will be reproduced before men and angels. O Saviour of the sinful and the lost, blot out *my* sins in Thy most precious blood, and write across the record, 'Pardoned, effaced, atoned for, remembered no more for ever' !

20. The prayer that 'we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before Him at His coming' (1 John ii. 28), is strikingly illustrated by these calm quiet words. Had he only brought seven instead of ten, his reception would have been a different one. Much was expected from him because much had been given. How much has been given to *me* in my stewardship towards *you* ! What *should* I do were one of God's jewels, entrusted to me, lost or tarnished in my keeping ?

21. Not bare satisfaction, but warm, glowing, delighted praise, and from *Him*. Even sincere praise is only valuable if the judge be a competent one ; ignorant indiscriminating praise is rather humbling than encouraging ; but *this* commendation is precious indeed. What is it to be faithful ? It is one of the highest qualities man can have ; he who has it may be implicitly trusted everywhere, and in all times and seasons. It is one of the Divine perfections, for we read, 'God is faithful' (1 Cor. x. 13). 'The joy of thy Lord.' Ah ! I cannot tell you what that is ; for eye hath not seen it, nor ear heard, nor heart conceived it.

22, 23. Equal fidelity, therefore equal reward. Probably his fellow-servants had not looked up to him as to one richly gifted ; but he had been 'faithful over a few things,' and should therefore be entrusted with many things ; the servant was now to be a ruler.

24, 25. No actual sin is charged upon him, but his own mouth condemns him. The only one who boasts that he knew his lord, is the one most ignorant of him. How weak is his excuse, how certain to aggravate his lord's just anger !

26, 27. 'Thou knewest,' etc. this may mean 'even on your own showing;' or it may mean 'even were this true, some effort should have been made.' 'Usury,' *i.e.* interest; in this bad world even words deteriorate in their meaning or application.

28. His punishment is the withdrawal of that which he has not valued. God often shows us by the loss of our blessings how precious they were.

29. He who had most was to have more: 'hath' means retains, values; 'hath not,' the reverse.

30. 'Outer darkness.' See on Matt. viii. 12. This parable does not mean that he who has least is oftenest unfaithful; far otherwise.

31. This grand description of the final judgment was given only three days before the crucifixion. 'His glory' is named twice in this verse, referring first to His personal, secondly to His judicial glory, 'all the holy angels with Him.' See 2 Thess. i. 7, and Heb. xii. 22.

32. What a meeting! what a separation! the *first* separation between good and bad from Adam's days till now. As yet the children of light and of darkness share the same home, sit side by side at the same table, kneel together in God's house.

33. Give other instances in Scripture of the right hand being the post of honour.

34. Here, for the first and only time, Christ calls Himself 'the King.' Gladly does the Church take up the strain, and say, 'Thou art the King of glory, O Christ!' 'Inherit.' Chrysostom finely says, He does not say 'receive,' but 'inherit,' as from a father whose children have a just title to what he leaves them. 'Prepared for you.' Yes, the preparation is going on at this very moment, for those of us whom God is preparing for that blessed home. One stone is added to another, one beautifying touch follows another, till at last even the painting and the gilding are all completed, and the ransomed spirit ready for its everlasting home. Remember the preparation is twofold; *in* you, *for* you.

35, 36. How astonishing these words to His rejoicing people ! Do not, however, imagine that liberality and kindness to the poor can work out salvation ; it would be a fearful mistake. See 1 Cor. xiii. 3. Love to Christ was the moving spring, and without it, all would have been worthless in God's sight. Doubtless the rich man was thought very kind to Lazarus, in tolerating such a wretched object at his gate, and feeding him from the broken meat left on his table ; but 'in Hades he lift up his eyes, being in torments.'

37-39. 'Ah ! no, Lord,' they reply ; 'we had not that privilege ; we were born out of due time.' But the words are not meant only for the blessed women who literally had that sacred honour ; they are for all who *for His sake* minister to His needy ones.

40. You thought you were tending My poor ; in reality, 'ye did it unto Me.' As far as human agency is concerned, Christ casts His entire cause on earth on the love of His people. All cannot give healing and release ; all *can* give sympathy, attention, kindness, a tender word, a loving look, an encouraging smile. It is so easy to make people happy by taking thought for them ; bringing a few flowers or grapes will brighten an invalid's weary day. A hymn sung, or a chapter read, at a bedside, may cheer a tired heart for hours. What is the good of learning singing if you never sing for Jesus ? Do not wait for something great to do, but remember that pleasant words and greetings, small acts of self-denial and help, are all parts of the glad service that we may do for Christ, that generous Master, Who recompenses even the cup of cold water given for His dear sake. I want you to do more for Him, to *give* more, to lay yourselves out for Him now while you are young. Keep a charity purse for thank-offerings for mercies, and answers to prayer ; this will quicken your gratitude, and at the same time provide a fund on which to draw.

41. 'Prepared for the devil,' not for man. Once they bade Him depart, not only from their coasts and villages while He dwelt on earth, but from the door of their hearts, at which He

still knocks with such wondrous patience. Now *He* says, 'Depart from *Me*.'

42, 43. Eternity hangs on our treatment of Christ in His suffering ones. 'Ye did it: come. Ye did it not: depart.' Divine love in the heart makes the feet swift, the hands tender, the voice comforting.

44. Alas! it was a fruitless vindication; they must depart beyond recal. The words of welcome were spoken to the righteous, before sentence was pronounced on the wicked, but it was carried into effect first on *them*. How terrible to take their last despairing look at the friends whom they were to behold no more at all for ever!

45. Learn from this not to despise anyone; be specially kind to unattractive people, to those who, for no fault of their own, are looked down upon.

46. No appeal, no hope (2 Thess. i. 9). 'Eternal life' (Rom. ii. 6, 7).

'In the day of judgment—Good Lord deliver us.'

CHAPTER XXVI.

1, 2. It would seem that the words in verse 2 were uttered on the evening of the third day of the Holy week in which He suffered, just two days before His death. During the fourth and most of the fifth days He remained in retirement with His Apostles at Bethany. Describe the institution of the Passover. Exod. xii. 27 explains its name. 1 Cor. v. 7 calls Christ our Passover. In what sense? The two other great Jewish feasts were the feast of Pentecost, and of Tabernacles.

3, 4. Meanwhile, His enemies were assembling. Give other notices of Caiaphas, who two years later committed suicide. He and Judas and Pilate all ended their miserable lives by self-murder; conscience might well make life a burden to them; and yet it ought to have made them tremble to rush uncalled to meet their doom, before that same Jesus Whom they had slain.

5. Not during the feast, because multitudes who owned Him

as a prophet then thronged the city ; but the unexpected offer of Judas induced them to risk it.

6. This describes what had occurred four days previously. It is here introduced to show what determined Judas to carry out his design ; viz. the rebuke that he received from Christ. See John xii. 7. As Martha served, Simon was probably her husband, or some near relative. He could not *then* have been a leper, but he must have been so long enough for the name 'Simon the leper' to have grown familiar.

7. What a group ! The Divine Saviour Himself the central figure, the raised Lazarus, the healed leper, the loving sisters, so true to Him, so tender in their ministering to the last. This anointing must not be mistaken for the one named in Luke vii. ; though that also took place in the house of one called Simon ; but a very different Simon—a proud Pharisee. How refreshing the precious ointment with which Mary anointed His sacred Feet, weary with many a toilsome step, wiping them with her hair in her deep lowliness and love, and pouring it with lavish hand on His sacred Head, to revive and exhilarate Him in the heated room under an Eastern sky. See John xii. 3.

8. John alone names the speaker—Judas Iscariot—and tells his base motive. Whatever good you try to do, some one will try to discourage you. Do not *be* discouraged.

9. 'Three hundred pence': more than nine pounds. Judas was treasurer to this holy company.

10. No hint was given of the real character of Judas till just before he departed from them for ever.

11. 'Me ye have not always.' How soon, how sadly, they must have recalled these words !

12. As the holy women were not to have the privilege of anointing Him even after the spices were bought (Mark xvi. 1), He regards it as done now. Mark xiv. 8 adds a word of precious commendation. On what other occasion did Christ praise her ? See Luke x. 42.

13. Here speaks the King. Only He could ensure im-

perishable remembrance of an act performed in the privacy of the Bethany home. Love to Him transfigures the humblest services. Her loving act is remembered to all time as Jesus bade.

14, 15. Observe the awful stages of his crimes: 1st, covetousness; 2nd, theft; 3rd, the intention to betray Christ—to obtain, by selling his Master, the money which he could not obtain by the sale of the ointment; 4th, Satan entering into him; 5th, the act that brands him for ever. Had he resisted the first of these sins, he never would have been even tempted to the last. Beware of *heart* sins! Who can tell whereunto they may grow? By yielding to one sin we actually tempt the Tempter. Had Judas resisted the devil when the accursed thought was first suggested to him, how different his fate! Another lesson from this terrible history is, that we may have the greatest possible advantages, and *yet* perish. Judas had Christ's own teaching and example; received His solemn warning, His final offer of friendship, 'the sop,' at the very last moment, and *then* betrayed Him!

16. Luke xxii. 6 also says 'he sought *opportunity* to betray Him.' Satan took care that he should find it. We fall little by little. There are crumbling cliffs on which if a man sets foot he slips lower and lower, more rapidly as he nears the precipice, till the fatal plunge comes, and he is dashed to pieces. So it is with those who deliberately yield to sin; the time comes when they 'cannot cease' from it (2 Peter ii. 14). All this time he went in and out with Jesus, Who, knowing all, endured his presence to the very last. None but Jesus could have borne with him.

17. And now began the solemn events of the fifth day in the Holy Week. Peter and John (Luke xxii. 8) were sent to prepare for the last Passover ever partaken of by Christ or His Apostles; the first celebration of the Lord's Supper, the point of transition between the two great festivals—the one a type, the other a perpetual and precious memory.

18. 'The Master.' How one's heart leaps at the beloved Name, evidently a familiar one! Mark and Luke add, 'there shall

meet you a man bearing a pitcher,' etc. Notice His minute foreknowledge. If He noted the pitcher of water, surely He notes *our* burdens, watches every step we take. The story of a life may be altered by our choosing one street instead of another. It is said that during the Passover the Jews were not allowed to let their rooms on hire, they must be lent gratis. The 'goodman of the house' was doubtless a disciple, or so high an honour would not have been conferred on him; yet, even had it been otherwise, he would have felt no surprise at the message.

19. How little they thought that they were preparing the last meal of which He would partake before He suffered!

20. About six p.m., or sunset. As the Jews reckoned their day from sunset to sunset, this would be the first hour of the sixth day, the day of crucifixion. Luke xxii. 14-18 gives the words He spoke before the announcement of the traitor. 'With desire I have desired,' expresses the strongest desire. The repetition of a word in Scripture is no 'vain repetition'; it intensifies the meaning, as 'Verily, verily, I say unto you.' The next incident seems to have been the washing of the Apostles' feet. See John xiii. 3-17. Then followed the announcement who it was that should betray Him, and the effect on the rest. The particulars are most fully given by John xiii. 18-38.

21-25. See John xiii. ; the whole chapter.

26. 'This is,' or *represents*, 'My body.' He saw all along how easily the Apostles misunderstood Him; and if He had meant to teach them so incomprehensible a mystery as that His corporeal body could be in two places at once, He would have explained Himself. True, our Communion Service speaks of His 'instituting and ordaining holy mysteries.' But when those words were written, 'mysteries' meant high and holy teaching, rather than what we now understand by the word. The Apostles understood Him as easily as when He said, 'I am the door' (John x. 9). Notice how faithfully our Sacramental Service follows Scripture.

27, 28. 'Shed for many.' The first covenant said, 'Do this and live'; the second says, '*Believe* and live' (Acts xvi. 30, 31). Remember that the symbol may be partaken of without the reality; and the reality may be enjoyed in the privacy of the closet, in the intervals of partaking the symbol. The third Rubric after the Communion for the Sick throws additional light on this point.

29. One of the unknown joys at His right Hand. Who is to say what wondrous bliss is here hinted at! The next events of this memorable night are recorded only by St. John, who specially wrote so as to fill up gaps in the sacred narrative. See John xiv., xvii.

30. They sang a hymn. Most likely Psa. cxviii., which, with the five previous Psalms, was usually recited or sung at the Passover. How sorrowful the hearts of those who sang it! Probably this took place just before they left the 'upper room.' Luke xxii. 39 says He went, 'as His custom was,' unto the Mount of Olives. What a day it will be when His Feet shall stand there again! (Zech. xiv. 4.)

31. Judas was now gone out, and great must have been the relief of Christ at his departure. There were none but loving hearts around Him now, yet, within an hour of the close of that solemn service, every one of them forsook Him. 'I will smite.' He takes it directly from the Father, as though no hand but His had 'bruised Him' (Zech. xiii. 7).

32. How explicit are His statements now! no more parables. 'Go before you,' an allusion to the practice of Eastern shepherds, who went before their flock. In Galilee He collected His scattered band, and gave them their commission afresh; once more trusting His work on earth to their faithful love—love which would never swerve again (Matt. xxviii. 16-20).

33. Peter did not mean all *men*, but all the Apostles. He had never sounded his own heart's depths. What do *we* know of the working of *our* hearts?

34. Surely *this* might have opened Peter's eyes.

35. 'All' said this, yet '*all* left Him and fled' (verse 56).

36. A garden called Gethsemane, west of Jerusalem. It still has olive-trees so ancient that Lamartine thinks them coëval with the time of Christ. 'Sit ye here ;' these words were addressed to eight of the eleven.

37. Step by step we approach the final scene, His chosen three accompanying Him a little nearer. So when *we* have looked our last on the outer world, one or two of our dearest may go with us to the edge of the dark valley, but no friend save One can enter it with us. Even the company of the beloved three was too much for Him in His sore anguish ; He must meet it alone, 'sorrowful, and sore troubled.' What a weight of woe the words carry !

38. He bade them 'watch' with Him ; near enough to behold His anguish ; probably *not* near enough to hear His agonized pleading, or sleep *must* have fled, however great their exhaustion. Heb. v. 7 refers to this awful woe. He was 'heard,' as we learn from that marvellous verse, Luke xxii. 43. 'Sorrowful unto death' does not mean sorrow from fear of death, or lasting till death, but keen enough to cause it. See Lonsdale and Hale.

39. His words prove, 1st, how revolting the cup was ; 2nd, how meekly He drank it. Never let us pray passionately for the removal of a sorrow, without adding 'nevertheless.' Little do we know into what depths a rebellious prayer might plunge us ! This was probably the moment in which the angel came to Him ; what an honour he must have felt it !

40. 'Profound sleep is often a symptom of grief. Mothers have slept immediately after the death of a child, and criminals the night before execution' (Dr. Rush). Had Peter passed that solemn interval in earnest prayer, how different might have been his conduct ! The tide of anguish rolled over Him in surges, and it must have been in a momentary ebb that He returned and found them sleeping. Well might He ask (Mark xiv. 37), 'Simon, sleepest thou ?'

41. One last, sorely-needed caution ! How gentle the rebuke, how loving the apology !

42. He understands His Father's mysterious silence, and does not repeat His prayer that the cup might pass from Him. Our prayers, too, are often followed by silence on God's part, because His will is not as ours; but when we bend to it, saying, 'Thy will be done,' peace takes up its abode in our troubled hearts. Sorrow's crown of sorrow is the struggle of the will.

43. Worn out with grief, they again slept.

44. Once more the deep waters flowed over Him. See Luke xxii. 44. Only Luke, the beloved physician, mentions the bloody sweat, caused by the dreadful struggle between shuddering nature and indomitable will. 'I will suffer' is the grand result of Gethsemane. 'It is finished,' the triumphant Voice from Calvary. Even *His* prayer admitted of more earnest pleading; for Luke says, 'being in an agony He prayed more earnestly.'

45. It was over now; the terrible conflict had lasted probably between an hour and a half and two hours; ending most likely soon after one a.m. 'Sleep on now, and take your rest,' should be put interrogatively, Greswell says: 'miserable comforters' had they proved, when He drank the bitter cup alone.

46. 'Let us be going,' not to escape, but to meet the traitor, who 'knew the place' (John xviii. 2), 'for Jesus oftentimes resorted thither.' And now he came with a band of men, probably Roman soldiers, not only with weapons, but with lanterns and torches, little needed under the full Easter moon, save to search the thickets lest He should have hidden Himself. Little they knew Him!

47. 'A great multitude' came forth to take *One*, that *One* 'the Lamb of God.'

48. All scruples were gone now. 'Lead Him away safely' (Mark xiv. 44): make sure of Him whilst you can.

49. How could He endure that kiss? Which of *us* could have borne it, knowing what it meant?

50. 'Friend,' *i.e.* companion. Luke adds the further question (xxii. 48), 'betrayest thou,' etc. Wherever we lay the

stress, what depths of meaning are revealed ! ' *Betrayest thou the Son of Man with a kiss ?* '

51. In the moment probably of His arrest this occurred. Only John, who ' was known to the high priest,' gives the names either of Peter or Malchus.

52. Christ checks Peter and heals Malchus, probably one of the foremost among His assailants ; this was His last miracle before He suffered. Matthew gives two reasons for the sheathing of the sword ; what are they ? John xviii. 11 gives another.

53. A legion was six thousand ; the number ' twelve ' referred perhaps to Himself and the eleven.

54. He voluntarily gave Himself up. ' No one taketh it away from Me ' (John x. 17, 18).

55. ' Swords and staves ' ; how keenly He felt the indignity ! This time He did not pass through the midst of them unseen, as on a former occasion (John viii. 59). Yet even now there was one glimpse of His majesty, at the sight of which they ' went backward, and fell to the ground ' (John xviii. 6).

56. Lonsdale says that the former part of this verse contains Christ's words, not St. Matthew's. St. Matthew's words begin, ' Then all the disciples,' etc. How honestly do the Apostles record their own dishonour ! Mark xiv. 51, 52, mentions ' a young man ' who followed Him a little way. Greswell thinks it was probably St. Mark himself, whose age most likely was between twenty and thirty at that time ; the Greek word used signifies some one under thirty and above twenty. Only the wearer of the garment was likely to have described it, and even its material, in that night of terror and confusion. Bodily agony and intense alarm alike conquer shame, when nothing else could.

57. He was taken to Annas first, the father-in-law of Caiaphas, till the latter was ready to receive Him. Annas had been high priest a long time ; he and Caiaphas are mentioned together (Luke iii. 2 ; Acts iv. 6).

58. How natural, yet how fatal a step ! He should have

clung to Christ's side, were it only to the hem of His garment.

'Unsustained by Thee, I fall.'

Probably the hall was a court, enclosed on all sides, but not roofed.

59. No *true* witness could be found. Notice similar treatment of Naboth (1 Kings xxi. 10), and of Stephen (Acts vi. 13).

60. The Jewish law required the testimony of two witnesses, and these were hard to find. Ready as the enemies of Christ were to accept any kind of false accusation, yet even so 'their witness agreed not together' (Mark xiv. 56).

61. There are four things to remark in this: 1st. To find anything, they had to go back three years; 2nd. One sentence was all they could bring; 3rd. Of this they perverted the meaning; 4th. After His death they proved that they had all along understood it aright (Matt. xxvii. 63).

62. Feeling that his case had failed, the high priest now sought to convict Jesus out of His own mouth.

63. The first question was unworthy of an answer; and we find Him 'dumb before His shearers' (Isa. liii. 7). To the second question, put in the most solemn form of administering an oath, He gives a startling reply.

64. 'Thou hast said,' *i.e.* thou hast said truly; or, as in St. Mark, 'I am' (xiv. 62). He seems to say, 'I am your prisoner now; but the day is coming when you yourselves shall stand at *My* tribunal.' Remember, *we all* shall be there.

65. What an affectation of religious horror!

66. None to plead for Him—not one voice! 'Worthy of death'; *i.e.* deserves to die.

67. See Isa. l. 6. Insult Him at the judgment-seat!

68. We learn from Mark and Luke that our Lord was blindfolded; it was an Eastern custom to veil condemned criminals, as unworthy to enjoy the light. See Esther vii. 8. When His Divine Face was covered, they bade Him say who it was that smote Him.

69. Mark and Luke tell us that Peter sat and warmed himself. That fireside, at that solemn hour, was for Peter the most dangerous place on earth. Just when we are in fancied security, temptation finds us. How little Eve foresaw a tempter in the serpent! At Christ's side he had courage to strike a sharp blow for his Master; *now*, apart from Christ, he is afraid of a damsel. There is no safety but in cleaving to Him Who alone can keep us in the hour of temptation.

70. The following 'afar off' was the first downward step; this denial was the second. After it he went out into the porch, perhaps meaning, or thinking it safer, to steal away. The first cock-crowing brought no compunction, though the first lie is ever the hardest to utter.

71. There another maid saw him, and said to some standing by, 'This fellow was also with Jesus.'

72. Then came the second denial, and 'with an oath.' There is an awful 'crescendo' in sin; yet the first sin wounds conscience most. A few hours before, Peter little thought of committing the never-to-be-forgotten sin of denying his Lord. Christ might, and did, forgive him; but we may safely say that, to the hour of his martyrdom, Peter never forgave *himself*. Our every word or deed plants either a rose or a thorn for our dying pillow—sows seed to be reaped in Eternity.

73. This time he was questioned by the kinsman of Malchus, and also by some one who noticed his Galilean accent. This occurred about an hour after the second denial.

74. Amidst the oaths and curses, accompanying this last denial, came a startling interruption—'the cock crew.'

75. Luke says (xxii. 61), 'the Lord turned and looked upon Peter.' Christ could not go to Peter, nor speak to him without endangering Peter's safety; but the look was enough. What must it have said? Peter went out, and wept bitterly. Well he might, for nothing can ever undo or recal sin—even though it be pardoned and blotted out—for it is an evil and bitter thing to sin against God.

CHAPTER XXVII.

1. THEIR object was to get Pilate to confirm their sentence, and to carry into effect His execution on the cross.

2. He was bound for security (John xviii. 12). He is now bound as a condemned malefactor.

3. 'Repented': rather, was filled with remorse. Repentance is accompanied by prayer; and it brings, in due time, pardon and peace. Remorse is in many cases followed by hardened indifference; in others by despair, as in the case of Judas. Conscience awoke in this miserable man, but not love for his betrayed Lord; or he would have followed Him from one tribunal to another, and knelt in agony at the foot of the cross, through all those dreadful hours, if haply he, even *he*, might be forgiven; and, in the full and perfect efficacy of *such* a Sacrifice and Atonement, I verily believe he *might*. Mention other allusions to conscience in Scripture. Every part of our complex nature is fallen, but not equally. The conscience and the affections are the least fallen; then the understanding, the imagination, the will—the last, the most of all. The urgings of conscience cannot always and absolutely be depended upon, but its *protests* may and must. Do *nothing* which conscience denounces; it *must* be sin to *you*. Pray for tenderness of conscience—a blessing easily lost, if its whispers are slighted. How different a sin looks after its commission! Before his awful crime, the money outweighed everything in the traitor's mind; now he can neither use nor keep it.

4. 'Sinned'—'innocent blood.' What a testimony from Judas, whose dark wicked practices would incline him to a suspicious, not a generous, view of Christ's actions! How different would have been his feelings could he have consoled himself by recalling but one questionable word or deed of his betrayed Master! 'Guilty or innocent, what is that to us? We have Him now—begone!' cry the tempters. If ever you are smarting through your own wrong-doing, do not

go for sympathy or help to those who led you into it ; they will be the last to give it.

5. If remorse on earth can be so terrible, what must it be in hell !

6. How scrupulous they were on this point, whilst in the act of carrying out the worst crime ever committed ! Yet even this was an unconscious fulfilment of prophecy (*Zech. xi. 13*).

7. The small price charged for the field may have been on account of the soil having been exhausted by the potters, and unfitted for cultivation.

8. See *Acts i. 19*.

9. This dark and complicated prophecy might have been uttered by Jeremiah, but it is recorded by Zechariah only ; or, more probably, Matthew wrote 'that which was spoken by the prophet,' and some early transcriber added the name 'Jeremiah.' Happily for us, no doctrine whatever is affected by this, or any other of the small discrepancies of Scripture. The question of inspiration is no more affected by the error of a copyist than by a compositor's misprint.

10. 'Zechariah was commanded to ask the Jews to give him the price which they thought he and his labours were worth. To show their contempt, they gave him thirty pieces of silver—the price of a slave. So Christ was valued at the price of a slave !' (*Barnes*.)

11. Between this verse and the preceding one is a hiatus filled up by *St. John* (*xviii. 28 to xix. 14*). All the Evangelists give this question and answer.

12. Christ answered Pilate ; but silence was by far the most dignified reply to the insulting charges of the chief priests and elders.

13, 14. Even when appealed to by Pilate as to these accusations, He still holds His peace, as the charges were not made by the Roman governor, but by His enemies the Jews.

15. Here follows another hiatus, filled by *St. Luke* (*xxiii. 4-16*). The governor was wont at the Passover to release one prisoner, chosen by the people. *Luke xxiii. 17*

says he must 'needs' (marg. note) do this. Some of the Christian emperors did the same at Easter.

16. 'Notable'; *i.e.* notorious. Barabbas was a robber, the abettor of an insurrection, and a murderer. With what startling effect St. Peter alludes to this! (Acts iii. 14, 15.)

17. By how many expedients Pilate sought to satisfy his unquiet conscience! He thought they would be ashamed to prefer Barabbas, probably the vilest criminal they had. Pilate was but a heathen, his guilt was not to be compared with that of Judas; yet he lost the grandest opportunity that ever fell to mortal man. Had he nobly resisted the shedding of that innocent blood, and dared all consequences, what a halo of glory would have rested on his brow for evermore!

18. 'Envy'; *i.e.* malice. The latter is almost a consequence of the former. Christ's enemies were jealous of His popularity, and afraid for their own. Jealousy opens the door for envy, and envy leaves it ajar for malice.

19. 'Pilate's wife was Claudia Procula. It was not till the reign of Tiberius that the wives of governors were allowed to go with their husbands to the provinces; an undesigned proof of the Evangelist's veracity' (Grotius). Nothing can exceed the superstitious folly of attaching importance to dreams, or being depressed by them; although it is not quite impossible that a dream may teach us a lesson, by revealing some secret idolatry of the heart, or showing the result of some wrong course on which we have entered. The reason why superstitious belief in luck, or chance, or dreams, dishonours God, is because it leads us to trust in some power apart from Him. In this special instance, as in other instances in Scripture, the dream was a Divine warning. 'That righteous man.' Stephen uses similar words, 'The Righteous One,' but in a higher sense (Acts vii. 52).

20. This probably occurred while Pilate was receiving the message. 'Persuaded.' Alas! they needed little persuading. St. Luke describes the unanimity of their awful cry (xxiii. 18).

21. Our choice lies not between Christ and Barabbas, but

between Christ and the world. Which will *you* choose? Perhaps you say, 'I have made no choice yet.' Ah! you *are* making it. Satan only asks you to choose *delay*, to take your time about it.

22. Notice the tumult that prevailed. Luke says, 'They were instant with loud voices.' Picture the scene: the fierce mob; the chief priests with hatred in their faces, stirring up the rabble; the vacillating judge, perplexed and uneasy, sure of Christ's innocence, but chiefly anxious for his own popularity; the calm, Holy Victim in the midst, one look from Whom could have struck them all into the deep silence of death.

23. One faint last effort; but the crowd sees that each remonstrance grows feebler.

24. Not all the bright waters of the Jordan could wash out the stain of that guiltless blood. It is not so easy to get rid of guilt. Christ's innocence was vindicated, 1st, by His judge; 2nd, by Claudia's dream; 3rd, by the traitor, Judas; 4th, by the centurion at the cross; 5th, by the dying thief. Find the five passages referred to.

25. Awful answer! how literally fulfilled! The Jewish nation, scattered, homeless, desolate, has experienced it for eighteen centuries. God does sometimes take us at our word.

26. Pilate had previously offered to chastise Him (Luke xxiii. 22), hoping that the lesser punishment—an exceedingly severe and cruel one—might avert the greater. But if a 'righteous man,' why punish Him at all? The Romans always scourged before crucifying. 'With His *stripes* we are healed' (Isa. liii. 5). Pilate acted, 1st, against his conscience; 2nd, against justice; 3rd, against his own decision.

27. 'The whole band' called to guard one unresisting Victim. The 'palace' is called by St. Mark the Prætorium (xv. 16).

28. In mockery of His Kingship, they put on Him a scarlet or purple robe. Dr. Macknight says, that the ancients called scarlet purple. The latter is the regal colour.

29. Name the various kinds of crowns mentioned in Scripture. This is the only crown, or garland, of thorns. 'A reed,' in imitation of a sceptre.

30. Mockery and insult. How hard to bear! 'Mockings' are mentioned with 'scourgings' in that wonderful chapter, Heb. xi. The world in these days approves religious observances, but it will ever hate religion of the heart. Be prepared for the covert taunt, the sarcastic smile, the quiet derision or disdain, that you may now and then encounter, but do not provoke them *needlessly*.

31. 'Put on Him His garments.' A small touch, but a fulfilment of prophecy. They 'led Him away to crucify Him.' So was it with Peter, as foretold (John xxi. 18, 19).

32. Probably Simon, the father of Alexander and Rufus, St. Mark tells us, was better known through his children than personally. In that wonderful enumeration of the household of faith in Rome, Rufus is specially mentioned (Rom. xvi. 13). Cyrene was in Lybia, the northern part of Africa, near the coast. Christ was exhausted with the agony in the garden; mental conflict is the most wearing of all things. Then the harassing night, the protracted examinations before Herod and Pilate, and the torturing stripes, must indeed have made the cross too heavy for Him. They 'compelled' Simon to bear it after Him; i.e. to carry one end of it, when He sank under the burden which at first He bore alone. The moment *our* life-burdens grow really beyond our strength, is the moment in which help and strength Divine will surely be granted. We overweight *ourselves*, but God never overweights us. Possibly, being compelled to bear Christ's cross led to Simon's conversion, and that of his family.

Now came the lamentations of the women in the crowd of spectators (Luke xxiii. 27), many of whom had doubtless seen His miracles on their beloved ones. The Maries, and the other holy women, seem to have watched near the cross in silent, voiceless anguish—anguish too deep for words.

33. And now He, with the two malefactors, had reached

Calvary, or Golgotha ; had taken, as *we* shall soon take, His last step on life's weary road.

34. See Psa. lxix. 21. Matthew often adopts the very words of prophecy, where other Evangelists give the details only. This was a stupefying drink, perhaps given by some compassionate bystander, to deaden the intense pain ; but when He had tasted He would not drink—He would have every faculty clear. 'Thou wilt feel all that Thou mayest pity all' (Keble). He tasted death for every man. All die, but not many actually *taste* of death. Most die in unconsciousness or sleep, and many so suddenly that they are 'alive for evermore,' before it even dawned upon them that they were going to die. What a moment it must be when the tired pilgrim passes at one step from the dark valley of the shadow of death, ere he knows that he has even entered it, and he finds himself, in the twinkling of an eye, in the glory of the light of God ! This glad surprise most certainly awaits some of *us* ; may we be quite *ready* for it !

35. Then followed the crucifixion of Christ and the two thieves. 'He was numbered with the transgressors' (Isa. liii. 12). 'Parted His garments.' See John xix. 23, 24. Each of the four soldiers who nailed Him to the cross took a part ; and the vesture, a choice offering probably from some faithful woman, they cast lots for. Even heathen soldiers, who had never heard of David, unconsciously fulfilled his prophecy (Psa. xxii. 18). Probably whilst they were nailing Him, He spoke the first of His seven sayings on the cross : I. 'Father, forgive,' etc. (Luke xxiii. 34). See Isa. liii. 12, and also Acts vii. 60.

36. They watched Him. Ah ! not as we, if God permit, watch our dying ones, with pleading prayer, and loving, wistful, tear-dimmed eyes ! They watched lest His disciples should try to relieve or help Him.

37. Pilate was entreated to alter this superscription, written, in the three principal languages of the world ; but he felt that he had yielded quite enough. The 'accusation' was a glorious truth, though doubtless written to spite the Jews.

38. As though He were the worst malefactor of the three.

39, 40. Mock Him in the death-pangs! Were they base enough for this? Ah yes! for now began four distinct kinds of mockeries. 1st. The passers-by derided Him. 'Thou that destroyest,' etc. Little thought they that at this moment the prediction was fulfilling before their eyes.

41, 42. 2nd. The mockeries of the chief priests and rulers. 'He saved others,' etc. How deep a truth underlies this taunt! truly, He could not save both. Some MSS. run thus, 'He saved others, can He not save Himself?' (marg. ref.)

43, 44. 'He trusteth in God.' See Psa. xxii. 8. How marked a trait must this have been, that even *they* knew it! but oh! the sting of hearing this just when He felt 'forsaken'! Had He come down from the cross, they would only have sought to nail Him to it afresh. The far greater miracle of the raising of the dead Lazarus had hardened them in their wilful unbelief. 3rd. Then the soldiers mocked His regal claims (Luke xxiii. 36, 37). His Divine claims being incomprehensible to them. 4th. The last mockery was that of the impenitent thief. Had the other thief reviled Jesus, he could not have expressed astonishment at his fellow-sufferer's conduct, and rebuked him with dignified severity. There is a deep calmness in his words, utterly unlike one just arrested in flagrant sin (Luke xxiii. 39-42). 'Dost thou not even fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation?' Notice his confession—his genuine sorrow for sin—his self-abhorrence—his efforts to bring his fellow-sinner to repentance—his glorious testimony to Christ at the very moment when it must have seemed hardest to believe. He was dying no glorious death on the battle-field, as the world counts glory; but a death of shame, as well as torture. Yet on the very cross itself He won His last trophy, ere He said, 'It is finished.' And it is well worth notice, that the dying thief apprehended His kingly character more clearly than the Apostles had done. 'Remember me when Thou comest in Thy kingdom': the kingdom beyond the grave. He does

not presume to ask a place in it, only to be 'remembered' there; 'if He will but think of me it will do.' Was ever faith like this? Even His own loving ones were ready to bury every hope in His grave. Surely it was 'a song in the night' to the dying Lamb of God! May we each say, in every hour of sorrow and temptation, 'Lord, remember me.' When earth smiles, and I am tempted to forget Thee, 'Lord, remember me'; in the hour of death, and in the day of judgment, 'Lord, *remember me.*' What was Christ's answer? II. 'Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise.' Oh, Divine balm for the anguish of the Cross, from that moment hardly felt perhaps, for the fulness of most unexpected joy! '*To-day,*' ere the sun set, they were to be together beyond the stars. '*With Me.*' It would not be Paradise without Him; dear indeed, and precious beyond all words, will be the glad greetings of mother and children, of long-parted friends and relatives; but dearer than all put together will be the loving, forgiving, welcoming smile of our own, our only Saviour. What lessons may we learn from this story? Next occurred the touching incident relating to Mary, which is naturally described by John (xix. 25-27). Clopas was not the Cleopas of the walk to Emmaus, but the same as Alphæus (Matt. x. 3). How the sword must have pierced Mary's soul (Luke ii. 35) as she stood beside the cross with other holy women and Mary Magdalene! III. 'Woman, behold thy son!' He would not leave her comfortless, but gave her, as a son, the disciple whom He loved—who, from that hour, took her to his own home, where she would have the cherishing care and sympathy of his mother Salome. After the day of Pentecost, she vanishes from our sight—we hear of her no more; no epistle mentions her, either as living or dead. Doubtless this was to check the tendency to regard her as the mother of God, instead of the mother of Jesus.

45. This darkness was miraculous—how produced, we cannot tell; it is believed, from reliable histories, to have extended to all parts of the world where the sun was above the horizon.

It was no eclipse, for it was full moon; and a total eclipse of the sun can never take place except at new moon, and only then when the relative position of the sun, the moon, and the earth is one of somewhat rare occurrence. Moreover, the mysterious darkness lasted twelve times as long as an eclipse.

46. Probably it deepened till He uttered the mysterious cry, IV., 'Eloi, Eloi,' etc. Psalm xxii. is full of the sufferings of Christ, and the glory which should follow. 'Father' was the cry of the first prayer on the cross; 'Father' was the utterance of the last prayer when the climax was past; but now it is, 'My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?' 'Thou'! Surely man's desertion and cruelty, and the triumph of hell, are enough! 'Forsaken' in this hour of extremity! 'Forsaken Me,' the Son of Thy love from all Eternity! Oh, words of deep meaning, none will ever fully comprehend them! Absolute desertion it certainly was not. No! a thousand times no; but it was the total hiding of God's Face, hidden behind the mighty mass of our sins—yours and mine. Look at Calvary, if you would see how God hates sin! The lost in hell cannot utter this cry, for they have forsaken God.

47. Probably they misunderstood Him, and really thought He was calling on Elijah for deliverance.

48. Now followed His next words, V. 'I thirst': fevered with the death-pangs. The dying on the battlefield often suffer far more from thirst than from their wounds. This was the third time that vinegar was offered Him, and His bodily state was now greatly changed. We may learn from this the duty of seeking every lawful alleviation of our sufferings of mind or body, whether they come through man's agency, or direct from God. A soldier, more merciful than the rest, ran and filled a sponge with vinegar, putting it on a stalk of hyssop to raise it to His lips. See Psalm lxxix. 21.

49. 'Let be,' etc.; i.e. stop that officious service. This was the last indignity He was to suffer. Next came the glad cry, VI., 'It is finished.' The bitterness of death was past, prophecy fulfilled, redemption wrought. 'The veil of the Temple

was rent in twain'; for the way was opened for evermore to the holiest of holies—to the very Throne of God.

50. 'He cried again with a loud voice.' So the dying saints and martyrs have often spoken at the last with glad exultant voice. Yes; the victory was won, the darkness past, the Father's smile beamed upon Him once more, and He said, VII., 'Father, into Thy Hands,' etc.; and, having so taught *us* how to die, as His holy Example had taught us how to live, He bowed His Head, and gave up the ghost. Compare Acts vii. 59, 60.

51. The rending of the veil, a rich curtain of the strongest fabric, and the earthquake, probably occurred at the moment of Christ's death. To this day there are strange rents and fissures in the rocks there; one, only a span wide, close to the spot where, tradition says, the cross stood, runs down an unknown depth into the earth. This is thought to have been the great earthquake in the reign of Tiberius, which destroyed twelve cities in Asia. Guilty Jerusalem was saved for a more awful fate.

52. 'The graves were opened by the earthquake, but the bodies of the saints still slept there, till after His resurrection.' (Dean Alford.)

53. They rose not, like Lazarus, to die again; their mortal bodies put on immortality. Evidently they had died but recently, since they seem to have been recognised when they 'entered into the holy city and appeared unto many.' The resurrection body! in identity, even in personal resemblance, the same with the cherished form that with breaking hearts we leave in God's treasure-house, the grave; but transfigured, clothed with immortal beauty, in robes of light. Yet amidst the white-robed throng we shall know them by many a tender token, and by the glad light of love unutterable in their faces, to be indeed our very own, our own at last, and for evermore.

54. The very question in dispute was His divinity. Christ died for claiming it, His enemies denied it *because* He died, instead of coming down from the cross. Now the centurion and others voluntarily assert it.

55, 56. Faithful loving women ! last at the cross, first at the sepulchre. Then followed the breaking of the thieves' legs, because it was the afternoon of the day on which the Passover was eaten in the evening, and the next day was a very solemn festival. They brake not Christ's legs, because the object was to kill the sufferers, and He was already dead : this testimony to the reality of His death from those whose business it was to ascertain it, is of great value. The spear thrust in His side made a large deep wound, or Thomas would not have been told to put his hand into it. Many besides the doubting disciple may thank God for this absolute proof of Christ's death, since our salvation rests on His death and resurrection. Zech. xii. 10, ' they shall look,' etc. : quite a different word is used for the nailing of the hands and feet, a word meaning bored as with an awl. Exod. xii. 46 says that no bone of the paschal lamb must be broken.

57. Arimathæa, called ' Ramathaim-Zophim ' in 1 Sam. i. 1, and Ramah in 1 Sam. i. 19. Joseph was ' a good man and a righteous ' ; one who was looking for the kingdom of God (Luke xxiii. 50, 51). He had not consented to the counsel and deed of Christ's enemies ; but he had not openly confessed Him till now (John xix. 39). The mysterious words in Isa. liii. 9 are explained by the grave having been doubtless prepared for Christ and the thieves ; whom it was intended to bury before the feast that evening. This would have been ' His grave with the wicked,' but He was laid in the rich man's new tomb.

58. Mark says, ' he boldly went in.' The bold disciple, Peter, proved the most cowardly of all ; the secret disciple proved the most courageous. Mighty power of a dead Christ over men's hearts ! It was the same with Nicodemus—it is the same still ; His death is His sublimest effort. Have *you* ever felt the attractive power of the cross ? Pilate marvelled if He were already dead, but assured on this point, and struck perhaps by the rank and courage of Joseph, he delivered up Christ's body. The reality of Christ's death was thus proved

by the unbiassed centurion ; and the dead Redeemer was placed in the reverent keeping of His friends.

59. And now Joseph took the sacred body, Nicodemus having brought 100 pounds' weight of myrrh and aloes. No anointing took place ; *that* had been done before (Matt. xxvi. 12) ; and perhaps the holy women intended to repeat it after the Sabbath. Most tender were the hands that touched Him now.

60. They laid Him in the tomb prepared by Joseph for himself, and a great stone, too heavy to be lifted, was 'rolled' to the door of the sepulchre.

61. The sad task was ended, Joseph and Nicodemus gone, and only the faithful Maries sat awhile beside the sepulchre.

62. The next day, the seventh in the Holy Week, His enemies came again to Pilate.

63. 'That deceiver,' reviling Him in the majesty of death, 'while He was yet alive,' evidently they thought Him alive no longer.

64. *i.e.* The pretended resurrection would be even more misleading to the people than the pretended Messiahship.

65. 'Ye have a guard' of Roman soldiers, employ them thus if you like ; 'make it as sure as ye can.' What was in the background of Pilate's mind, in giving this ironical advice ? None can tell.

66. All was done, the great stone sealed, and the Roman soldiers His unconscious guards of honour till the angels come.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

1. 'THE other Mary,' *i.e.* the mother of James the Less. They came in grief and perplexity, wondering how they should roll away the stone. What a contrast to their return, when they ran in eager haste to carry the glad resurrection tidings ! Their sore hearts had craved to behold Him where they had seen Him laid ; but God's thoughts were higher than their expectations. So it is always ; the very absence of what we

yearned and prayed for, is preparing us, if we are His indeed, for bliss beyond all thought.

2. 'Behold'—a note of preparation for what follows; the angel had rolled back the stone, he sat upon it to honour the sacred spot, to overawe the Roman soldiers, and to await the Maries, to whom the resurrection was to be made known. Their faithful love had earned the privilege of being the first to hear it.

3. The angel appeared 'as lightning,' coruscations of glory from his Home; his 'white raiment' typified the purity of that Home. Moses' face shone when he descended from the mount, but he wore no white raiment, he was yet a mortal man, liable to the stain and soil of temptation and sin.

4. Is the sepulchre sure *now*?

5. 'Fear not *ye*'—the 'ye' is emphatic; well might the Roman soldiers quake, who would have kept the living among the dead. 'I know that ye seek Jesus.' Are *you* seeking Him? The angel's knowledge of the holy women and their errand is one of many proofs that angelic beings know and care about our concerns. Little can we tell how thin a veil separates us from the invisible world; on *that* side it is transparent, but not on this. They see *us*, but the earth-shadows prevent our seeing *them*.

6. 'He is risen, even as He said.' Have you forgotten? Did you doubt His own word? Why seek ye Him *here*?

7. 'Go quickly.' Oh! glad errand! Oh! willing feet that ran! Mark says, 'Go, tell His disciples and *Peter*.' Without some special message, poor sorrowing Peter, who had denied that he was a disciple, would hardly have dared to count himself among the eleven. Probably the women separated, to find as many of the disciples as possible. Mary Magdalene found Peter (John xx. 2).

8. 'Fear,' *i.e.* awe, caused by the sight of the angels, of whom there were two, one guarding the sepulchre without, and one within. Yet the eleven thought the women's words idle talk (Luke xxiv. 11).

9. Only Matthew records this meeting. 'All hail'—a word of friendly greeting. Christ first appeared to women; but no Evangelist mentions His meeting with His mother; doubtless none witnessed it. What a moment it must have been for her!

10. His disciples met Him several times before He went into Galilee, and would have missed Him by going there at once.

11. The soldiers reported the simple truth.

12. Joseph and Nicodemus at least were absent. 'Large money.' Truly it would need much, but the whole Jewish cause was at stake. How the soldiers must have scorned the elders who could stoop to so base an act.

13. 'While we slept'; then how did they know it? Moreover, to sleep at their post was a capital offence; and by bringing this false charge against themselves, they were branded with infamy. Who could believe such a story?

14. 'Persuade' Pilate. Ah! they had once already persuaded him against his inclination, his judgment, his conscience; now they undertake to persuade him against his common-sense. No doubt he did hear of the resurrection, and what strange thoughts must it have awakened!

15. *i.e.* till Matthew wrote. For the next incidents of this most eventful morning, see John xx. 1-18. For the memorable walk to Emmaus, see Luke xxiv. 13-32. The two, returning at once to Jerusalem, hear that Christ has been seen by Peter, His third appearance. He next appeared to the assembled disciples, whilst listening to the wondrous tale of the two from Emmaus (Luke xxiv. 33-43). For His fifth appearance, eight days later, the unbelief and subsequent repentance of Thomas, and other details of the deepest interest, see John xx. 19-29, and the whole of John xxi.

16. Some spot known to the disciples, but not named; perhaps the Mount of Transfiguration.

17. 'Some doubted'; possibly some of the 'five hundred brethren' (1 Cor. xv. 6), certainly none of the eleven. Only the truthful writer of a perfectly true history would have

ventured to record this. Deceit must weigh its every word, and breaks down even then sooner or later.

18. Infinite authority in the hands of Infinite love.

19. They were to make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the Triune Name. The Apostles did not ask, 'Lord, how can we, poor, ignorant fishermen, conquer the world for Thee ?'

20. They had indeed a wide commission, a mighty task ; but He said, 'Lo, I am with you alway,' or 'all the days' (marg. note), 'even unto the end of the world.' Yes, He is with us still. Only open your hearts to Him, and He will come in ; not as a transient guest, 'that tarrieth but a night.' He will abide with you, 'not for a time, but for ever.'

'Amen : come, Lord Jesus.'

ST. MARK.

PRELIMINARY REMARKS.

MARK was probably the 'John, whose surname was Mark' (Acts xii. 12). He was the son of one of the Maries, and the nephew of Barnabas. Peter calls him 'Mark, my son,' i.e. convert (1 Peter v. 13). Peter is believed to have authorized the introduction of this Gospel among the Churches. Many things honourable to himself are omitted, and his faults plainly stated. This affords incidental proof that Peter had some oversight of Mark's Gospel. To relate the official life of Christ is its main object.

CHAPTER I.

1. How grand is the opening verse ! See Rom. i. 3, 4. 'Born of the seed of David' ; 'declared to be the Son of God.' Note how carefully this is worded.

2-11. See Matt. iii. 1-17.

12, 13. Matt. iv. 1-11.

14, 15. 'The time is fulfilled.' Long had they waited for it—generation after generation ; but 'the fulness of the time' (Gal. iv. 4) came at last, and with it earth's Light and Life.

16-20. Matt. iv. 18-22.

21, 22. 'Never man so spake' (John vii. 46).

23. The fallen spirits are generally called 'unclean spirits,' to show how far they have fallen from purity. Every sin defiles ; heart sin, if allowed, is as defiling as open wickedness ;

even 'the thought of foolishness is sin' (Prov. xxiv. 9). When we remember how infinitely pure and holy God is, we may well say, 'Create in me a clean heart' (Psa. li. 10).

24, 25. Christ invariably refused the praise of devils. If any of *you* are ever flattered by the ungodly, ask yourselves with dismay, 'What can I have done to bring *this* upon myself ?'

26. 'Tearing,' i.e. convulsing him, doing him all the hurt possible to be done in the Great Healer's presence.

27, 28. They were amazed and awed.

29-31. See Matt. viii. 14, 15.

32-34. They were borne thither fainting, moaning, or struggling and resisting, endangering those who brought them. They returned walking with untired limbs, wondering, rejoicing, and (may we not hope ?) praising God.

35. Wearied, as He must have been, with His long day's toil, how little sleep He allows Himself !

36, 37. He is followed and brought back, for many were seeking Him. How unlike the Gadarenes !

40-45. Matt. viii. 2-4.

CHAPTER II.

1-22. SEE Matt. ix. 1-17.

23-28. Matt. xii. 1-8.

CHAPTER III.

1-6. MATT. xii. 9-15.

7-12. A summary of Christ's labours by the Sea of Galilee. Verse 10, they 'pressed upon Him.' See Mark v. 31. Are we pressing to touch Him ? No accidental touch or contact would have healed an unbelieving Pharisee ; it must be the loving touch of faith.

13-19. See Matt. x. 2-4.

20-22. His friends say, 'He is beside Himself'; His enemies say, 'He hath Beelzebub.'

23-30. Matt. xii. 25-32.

31-35. Matt. xii. 46-50.

CHAPTER IV.

1-20. SEE Matt. xiii. 1-23.

21. Matt. v. 13-16.

22. Give instances of this. Achan, Gehazi, Ananias and Sapphira, etc. Hardly anything is really hidden even from man; it is only a question of *time*. The very secrets of the heart are known to God.

24. Matt. vii. 2.

25. 'Hath' (Matt. xxv. 29).

26-29. This beautiful parable is only recorded by St. Mark. The husbandman goes on with his daily work, leaving the precious seed to grow, 'he knoweth not how.' Nor do *we* know how the seed of the Word roots itself in the heart; it is a secret work, watched by no eye but God's. We see the result of it plainly enough; we say how gentle, and humble, and unselfish, and considerate for others, such an one has become; but God sees far deeper.

28. 'Of herself.' Yes, but the good seed must be sown first, otherwise the earth bringeth forth *of herself* only weeds and thorns. How silently the work goes on! Nature's kindest processes commonly do. So is it in the heart, the conflict is always going on, unseen, unheard, untold, except to God. Life is a battle-ground always, to the true soldier of Christ. Do *we* find it so? 'Blade, ear, full corn.' Newton well described these several stages as the A B C of religion. Remember one thing, 'C never knows his own face.' 'Straightway He putteth forth His sickle.' This explains why our best go from us soonest. When they are ready, they go; our love, our prayers, our need of them cannot detain them; they hear the Master's call, and their place on earth is vacant, for they

have found their place in heaven ; they are away beyond life's long shadows, in the fair country on the other side.

30-32. See Matt. xiii. 31-32.

33-34. See Matt. xiii. 34-35.

35-41. Matt. viii. 23-27.

CHAPTER V.

1-20. SEE Matt. viii. 28-34.

21. Luke viii. 40 says that the multitude, who had doubtless seen from far the stilling of the tempest, 'welcomed Him ; for they were all waiting for Him.'

22-43. See Matt. ix. 18-26.

42. What must have been her feelings ? Would she remember her brief sojourn in the world of departed spirits ? How near it is, how soon *we* shall be there ! Are we living for earth only, or are we daily training for heaven's blessed work, in which we shall never either fail or weary ? O glorious hope, to cheer us on amid life's toil and weariness ! What must it be, not only to pour out our confession of sin to our own Saviour Himself, but to lay down the burden and the memory of it at His feet, and to hear Him say, 'Enough ; no more of this, thou art now perfectly sinless for ever.' Then with loving tender words He will bid His weary ones, some of whom hardly know what rest is, enjoy it in all its fulness in the society of their own beloved ones ; ere He gives them that joyful work which is even sweeter than rest, or than aught save His own presence always. Well may our blessed ones be described as

'Pouring out their rapture sweet
At His own most sacred feet.'

CHAPTER VI.

1-6. SEE Matt. xiii. 53-58.

1. *i.e.* to Nazareth.

2. He is the 'Wisdom of God' (1 Cor. i. 24), hence the unmistakable indications that even *they* perceived. They had

heard of His miracles, but because of their unbelief they saw very few.

4. The 'Man of sorrows' had moved amongst them so often, that the sight of Him had grown too familiar for their dull hearts to appreciate. Had *we* watched Him in His youth fashioning ox-yokes, perfecting His humble work with patient care and pains, should *we* have said 'This is the Christ'? Did He fare worse in Nazareth than He would do as a way-farer in our streets now? Should not *we* too have said, 'Is not this the carpenter'?

7-13. See Matt. x. 1-15.

13. The 'oil' must be carefully distinguished from extreme unction, which is falsely supposed to prepare the soul for entering eternity; a fatal delusion lulling the deceived conscience into a calm worse than any tempest. The oil named by St. Mark was the miraculous instrument of bodily cure; as the salt in a new cruse healed the waters, so that, for centuries afterwards, Elisha's spring was noted for its health-giving properties (see 2 Kings ii. 20-22), or as the meal (2 Kings iv. 41).

14-29. See Matt. xiv. 1-12.

30. 'Told Him all things.' We too, if we would have our Master's blessing on our work, must take it daily to Him, Who will one day say to each of us, 'What have you done with your life'?

31-44. Matt. xiv. 13-21.

45-56. Matt. xiv. 22-36.

48. That little vessel held almost the whole visible Church of Christ then on earth, except a few followers here and there. One might say, 'Surely that ship, so richly freighted, will escape the storms.' No; winds and waves were against them; they were distressed in rowing; the night darkened, and 'Jesus had not yet come to them' (John vi. 17). They doubtless thought, as we so often do, 'all these things are against us;' whereas, if we are His, all things are ready for us.

56. 'The border of His garment.' They had heard of her who was thus healed (Matt. ix. 20).

CHAPTER VII.

1-23. SEE Matt. xv. 1-20.

4. After attending the market, or any public place, the Jews, having been exposed to contact with Romans, washed, to purify themselves from ceremonial defilement. They thought many things unclean which Moses had not prohibited. These observances were harmless in themselves, but being enforced as if they had Divine authority, they were put on the same level as God's precepts.

7-9. Here we have a regular gradation of sin : 1st, teaching men's precepts instead of higher doctrine ; 2nd, leaving God's commandments ; 3rd, rejecting them.

13. 'Many such,' etc.; a specimen of their treatment of God's law. He still interposes to reward those who obey, to punish those who disobey it. I remember a remarkable illustration of this. A few miles from the home where I passed nearly half my life, is a ducal park, a favourite resort for excursionists. One day a party of twenty went, one of them a girl, whose parents had forbidden her to go ; but in utter defiance of the prohibition she accompanied the rest. Whilst they were in the park a terrific thunderstorm came on, and instead of rushing into the open, they did the most foolish thing possible, and ran under a noble tree for shelter from the rain. The electric bolt struck both it and them ; and every one of the party lay insensible beneath it. A woman whom I often visited was the first to recover consciousness, and she told me how terrible it was to see all her companions lying motionless and senseless around her, her husband on one side, her son on the other, both apparently dead. By degrees most of them revived, though all were seriously shaken, and many severely hurt. At last help came ; they were taken to the nearest hotel, and those who could not sit up were laid on tables in one large room, whilst all the doctors in the place hurried in to give what help they could in a scene such as none of them had witnessed before. To nineteen they brought more or less relief, but the

twentieth, 'the disobedient daughter, was beyond all help, summoned in an instant to the awful presence of God.

21-22. Of these sins some are breaches of the 7th, 6th, 8th, 10th, 9th, and 3rd commandments. 'Pride' may be considered a breach of the 1st; the proud man is his own god, and he expects others to bow down to him.

24-30. See Matt. xv. 21-28.

31-32. The miracle is only given by Mark. This sufferer could hear nothing; so He used symbolical action, *touching* the ears and tongue.

34. 'Ephphatha.' Mark loves to use Christ's own words of power in his histories of the miracles. See v. 41, and xiv. 36.

35, 36. Christ's voice the first he heard. Perhaps it will be so in Paradise.

37. 'He hath done all things well.' One of life's deepest lessons! Give instances of this from Scripture. However things may look, take it on trust now; you shall *know* it hereafter. Meanwhile, often think how good God is to us in enriching our lives with so many blessings!

CHAPTER VIII.

1-10. SEE Matt. xv. 32-39.

3. 'Come from afar.' Yes; He knew the home of each one.

11-13. See Matt. xvi. 1-4.

12. 'Sighed deeply' over the hardness of heart of the Pharisees.

14-21. See Matt. xvi. 5-12.

16. Who would think these disciples, so slow to understand, would form 'the glorious company of the Apostles,' whose labours fill the Acts?

22-26. He was blind, and could not see where he was going; but he gladly let Christ take 'hold of him by the hand,' and lead him whither He would. Oh, wise blind man! Are *we* doing this? Are *we* saying, 'Lord, lead *Thou* me on; I can trust no other guide'? He could only at first distinguish men

from trees by their motion. We see just as little either of ourselves or of Christ—we see ‘in a mirror darkly ; but *then* face to face’ (1 Cor. xiii. 12). This is the only progressive cure in Christ’s miracles ; He healed the blind five times.

27-38. See Matt. xvi. 13-28.

29. St. Mark, writing under St. Peter’s direction, is silent respecting Christ’s words of commendation (Matt. xvi. 17-19), whilst His words of blame are given in all their severity.

34-36. ‘Whosoever’ means each one of us. Bring your religion into the little events of daily life. Unless it guides us in these, it guides us in nothing.

38. ‘Ashamed’ of Christ ? Yes ; when you smile at jests on sacred things, or hear religion, or religious people, spoken slightly of, and give no sign of disapproval, you are ashamed of Christ. You can often silence a scoffer without even speaking a word—by quietly changing your seat for a more distant one. If asked ‘Why?’ say calmly, ‘Because you spoke slightly of what I value most.’ Words like these, even from a girl’s lips, have been God’s arrow of conviction. The scorner will not scorn you for them ; and, if he should, what then ?

CHAPTER IX.

1-13. SEE Matt. xvii. 1-13.

4. How full of interest are these brief glimpses of the inhabitants of that glorious land, of which we chiefly know its negative side—no pain, no sickness, no tears, no parting, no night, no sorrow, no sin, no curse, no hunger or thirst, no death ! Its positive side would be beyond our comprehension even were it described. But we shall dwell there for ever if we are Christ’s servants now. *Are* we His indeed ? I know that some of you are : I believe that He is gently drawing others ; but are there not several who care for none of these things ? What can I say to *them* ?

14-29. See Matt. xvii. 14-21.

30-32. Matt. xvii. 22, 23.

33-37. Matt. xviii. 1-6.

38. 'In Thy name'; that made all the difference.

39. Christ does not say he ought not to have followed Him. Notice the language of Moses, Num. xi. 24-29.

40. A lesson of Christian large-heartedness. A believer with a cramped narrow heart does no honour to his Master. We should earnestly guard against thinking people wrong merely because they and we see some things in a different light.

41. Can it be that there is a record kept of such small acts as these? Yes, it must be so; for the 'reward' rarely comes on earth.

42-48. See Matt. xviii. 6-9.

49. Each disciple needs some fiery trial to purge the dross; not one grain of gold shall be lost in the crucible. The more precious the faith, the sharper the fire that tests it. For silver the fining-pot suffices; the gold needs the furnace.

50. Here Christ seems to refer to the strife for pre-eminence (verse 34). Have peace among yourselves; the battle will rage fiercely enough *without*.

CHAPTER X.

1-12. SEE Matt. xix. 1-12.

1. Christ's final departure from Galilee. How little did the Galileans think that He was leaving them to return no more! He was yet in the prime of manhood, and no doubt they expected many a future visit. We, too, may be looking forward to a future that some of us will never see; let us then prize our fleeting opportunities. The march of death is a very silent one; no herald goes before him to give us even the faintest indication that such or such a Sabbath is the last we shall spend on earth. Shall we be *ready* when the hushed footsteps enter *our* door?

5. 'For your hardness of heart'—'from hardness of heart, and contempt of Thy Word and commandments, good Lord deliver us.' A hard heart—what is it? *how* does it harden? Indifference to religion, impatience under rebuke and control, thinking lightly of sin, waiting for a convenient season—all

these things harden the heart, till it *cannot* soften; for even the long-suffering Spirit has ceased to strive.

13-16. See Matt. xix. 13-15.

13. The Gospels are a series of exquisite pictures: we can almost *see* the fond eager faces of the mothers, and hear the rebuking disciples say, 'Take these infants hence; what good can *they* get?' *You*, too, have been brought to Him by loving mothers; and, in Confirmation, you ratify and *confirm* the gift. 'Lord, I have been given to Thee in baptism an unconscious babe; now I come of my own accord, giving myself, and all I am, or have, to Thy glad service.' How happy even *this* life may be, when we have Christ's blessing warm at our hearts, quickening every faculty into brighter, higher life, till the glad day dawns when He will say to us, 'Come up higher; My Home shall be yours for ever'!

17-31. Matt. xix. 16-30.

22. 'Sorrowful.' Ah, yes! never could he quite enjoy his riches, or forget at what a costly price he retained them. Had he obeyed Christ he would have had a few years' toil and privation, and *then* the full enjoyment of 'treasure in heaven.' Eighteen centuries of bliss already, and all Eternity to come!

32. 'In the way' probably between Ephraim and Jericho. Christ, the Great Leader, went on first; they followed, 'amazed' at His courage, 'afraid' for themselves.

35-45. See Matt. xx. 20-28.

46-52. See Matt. xx. 29-34.

CHAPTER XI.

1-11. SEE Matt. xxi. 1-11.

1. Mount of Olives, a Sabbath day's journey from Jerusalem; *i.e.* about a mile.

11. He 'looked round about upon all things,' as we look on a beloved spot that we are leaving for ever.

12-26. See Matt. xxi. 12-22.

24. Had anyone asked Archimedes what was the greatest power that man could use, he would probably have said, 'The

lever.' 'Give me but a fulcrum to rest it on, and I will move the world.' Ask the man of practical science the same question now, and he may say, 'Electricity.' Ask the matured Christian, and he will tell you, 'Faith and prayer.' God's merciful interpositions in his life-history have been so many wayside pillars of remembrance, on each of which he writes 'Ebenezer,' 'Jehovah Jireh.' The first word recalls past answers to believing prayer; and the 'Jehovah Jireh' bids him look calmly on the unknown future, for which 'the Lord' will most surely 'provide.' When you pray, *take hold* of the promises; they are to each of us what our faith makes them. *Plead* them with God. Looking back to the holy men mentioned in Heb. xi., we see the honour given to their faith, notwithstanding many shortcomings and failures in the very grace of faith itself. Gideon, for instance, required *two* signs; Samson and Jephthah were far from perfect; and David fell into awful sin. Still God accepted and honoured their faith.

25, 26. Repeated from the Sermon on the Mount.

27-33. See Matt. xxi. 23-27.

28. Christ never answered questions prompted by idle curiosity, or by malice. Give instances of both kinds of questions.

32. Luke xx. 6 adds that they feared stoning if they denied that John was a prophet.

33. To escape this dilemma, these wise teachers professed ignorance on a point which they should specially have investigated.

CHAPTER XII.

1-12. SEE Matt. xxi. 33-46.

1. The wine-press. A child watching the process might say, 'Do not crush those beautiful grapes; it spoils them.' So we ignorantly say, as a dark cloud of sorrow bursts on one of God's own children, 'Lord, spare *him that* trial.' But the higher wisdom says, 'I cannot spare him; I spared not the Son of My love.' The furnace of affliction is God's working-place. 'The best fruit loads the broken bough.'

5. See Matt. xxiii. 34, 35. It was a perilous errand, yet they went. Mention others in the Bible who were sent on perilous errands.

9. The question is answered in Matt. xxi. 41, by those who stood around, and in stronger terms than Mark uses. The destruction of Jerusalem, and the call of the Gentiles, are the fulfilment of this.

10. Some learned Jews own that this verse must relate to the Messiah.

13-17. See Matt. xxii. 15-22.

14. Four Cæsars are mentioned in the New Testament: Augustus, in whose reign Christ was born; Tiberius, in whose reign He was crucified; Claudius Cæsar (see Acts xi. 28); and Nero, under whom St. Paul was beheaded.

17. The infamy of Tiberius makes Christ's answer the more striking. Not even *he* must be defrauded of a due.

18-27. See Matt. xxii. 23-33.

18. Find Scriptural notices of the resurrection. Every plant that grows is a type of it. What a day it will be when the mortal bodies that we followed to the grave with bitter tears, shall arise—not as we remember them, but adorned, beautified, perfected for ever, as God in His lavish bounty will make them. Yes, our dim eyes shall one day see the 'King in His beauty'; our ears shall hear the angels' song, and our lips shall join in it, with an undertone of deeper thankfulness than angels who never sinned can know.

28-34. See Matt. xxii. 34-40.

30. 'Heart, soul, mind, strength.' Do it with the whole strength of your nature.

34. Perhaps this upright lawyer may have been one of the great company converted after the day of Pentecost; or possibly, though near the kingdom, he never entered it. The Bible is full of unfinished histories, fragments of countless lives. How solemn will be the day when the whole of every life will stand revealed!

'God is writing now the story
Of *our* lives and actions, too.'

Be Christ's *now*. Do not let me be 'perplexed about you' (Gal. iv. 20). May God's grace enable you to live such lives, that those who gently close your eyes in their long, quiet slumber, may say, 'She has entered into peace'!

35-37. See Matt. xxii. 41-46.

37. 'The common people heard Him gladly.' He was Himself poor and lowly: let none therefore feel ashamed of poverty, unless incurred by their own fault; even then the fault is the thing to be ashamed of.

38-40. What a true picture of the Romish priests, their successors! The Statute of Mortmain was passed to prevent lawful heirs losing their all through an unjust death-bed will.

41. He 'sat down,' probably to rest after long teaching. The 'treasury,'; *i.e.* the chest for offerings.

42. How few would have given their last mite *but one*! *She* gave both—'even all her living.' Mark's minuteness of detail gives us the exact value of a mite.

43. What a lesson for *us*, who spend so much on self, and give Christ so little! What is our religion worth if it costs us nothing—not even a little self-denial?

44. Of all present, Christ alone knew her circumstances, and the magnitude of her offering. Probably she thought only of its smallness, and was quite unconscious that He noticed her at all. Little thought she what He said of her when she was gone! God will be no man's debtor, though He often recompenses such deeds not here, but in the great hereafter. When the histories of all lives are known to men and angels, we shall hear how it fared with her from that moment to the end. Doubtless, though poor and lonely, she had 'God and enough.'

CHAPTER XIII.

1-31. SEE Matt. xxiv. 1-35.

9. 'Beaten.' See Acts v. 40, and various other passages. Paul received from the Jews at different times 195 stripes,

each one noted in the book in which God records His children's sufferings for Christ's sake.

11. 'Be not anxious beforehand what ye shall speak.' Do to-day's work earnestly, 'with both hands'; thus 'you may be unconsciously shaping a future of which you little dream.' 'Given you,' etc. Yes; just when needed. In a moment one cry for help and guidance may bring to our aid 'the infinite resources of God.' Let us *use* this high privilege.

12. After foretelling the death of many of Christ's followers, Luke xxi. 18 adds, 'Not a hair of your head shall perish.' This promise, like Psa. xci., has a higher meaning than exemption from bodily harm, though often literally fulfilled.

20. 'The elect.' The doctrines of election, and of man's free-will and responsibility, are two parallel lines of truth. No human mind comprehends *how* this is; but what we have to do with is plain and simple—'Him that cometh to Me, I will in no wise cast out' (John vi. 37). Had we only this one text to rest upon, it would be enough.

23. 'Take ye heed.' Reasons why.

27. How gladly they will do it! Some of their offices towards us must be trying and perplexing, one would think; but this great in-gathering will be joy indeed.

32. Greswell says that Christ in His human nature may not have been omniscient, though always in His Divine. He constantly used His Godhead for others; very rarely for Himself, for He would know human weakness and trials. No doubt, as a babe, He *learnt* to walk, and later on to read, and in His youth to make ox-yokes. On the cross He *really* suffered, though His Divine power could have made it a bed of roses, whilst to all around He seemed in torture; but no! in every point, save *one*, He took our nature, from His birth to that supreme moment in which He yielded up His life.

34. 'Sojourning in another country'; and yet 'not far from each of us.' 'To each one his work.' What a mercy that Adam's sentence was toil, not idleness!

35. 'Ye know not.' Life's morn is sometimes its eventide

—its night. We look on a young, happy face, and say how bright the morning of her life is! and perhaps angel-watchers take up our words, and say in tones our dull ears cannot catch, 'Well may she look bright! her morn, and noon, and eventide are over; to-morrow she is going home!'

CHAPTER XIV.

1, 2. SEE Matt. xxvi. 2-5.

3-9. See Matt. xxvi. 6-13, and John xii. 1-8.

7. 'Ye have the poor,' etc. Succouring and comforting are joys only known on earth; for they imply need or sorrow, which have no place in our Father's Home.

10-11. See Matt. xxvi. 14-16.

11. 'Were glad.' Satan, too, was glad, little thinking that Christ's death was the heaviest blow ever struck at his dark rule.

12-16. See Matt. xxvi. 17-19, and John xiii. 1-17, for the washing of the disciples' feet previous to the supper.

14. 'The Master,' unlike earthly masters, helps His servants in their work; other masters only accept *successful* work: He brings good out of very failures, if we have faithfully sought to please Him. Other masters may be uncertain and capricious, hard to satisfy, and prompt to blame; but not so Jesus. He is the Master of our joys and of our sorrows—of every sorrow that we can possibly have; He is the Master of our lives; the Master of death and the grave. Is He *your* Master?

17-25. See Matt. xxvi. 20-29.

19. 'Is it I?' How much nobler than if each had looked on his neighbour and said, 'Is it he'?

28. 'Good were it,' etc. Imagine Judas *hearing* this! Notice the proof this verse affords of the eternity of punishment. If, after a million years in hell, Judas were at last eternally happy, could this have been said? Heaven is so infinitely blessed a place, that it were worth while to be born, and to pass through cycles of sorrow, to reach it at last.

26-42. See Matt. xxvii. 30-46.

29. Alas for Peter ! Sincerity, and zeal, and love did not suffice without nearness to Jesus. How grand an honour had he died with Him ! Probably he needed this bitter lesson ; and so, for a brief hour, God left him to his own self-confident keeping. Oh ! to be in Christ's keeping *always*—moment by moment !

33, 34. What stronger expressions could be used ? 'Greatly amazed ;' 'sore troubled ;' 'exceeding sorrowful, even unto death.' We can best appreciate their force by remembering how simply Scripture tells of the greatest *human* woes. We have seldom any comment upon them, except in such words as 'Aaron held his peace'—'Hezekiah turned his face toward the wall, and prayed.' When Christ raised the widow's only son, we are briefly told who he was ; we do not hear of the mother's desolation, or of the transport of joy in which she received back her dead.

35. Even Christ's prayer is unfulfilled : not unheard, or unheeded. Should *we* then, who ask in utter ignorance, marvel if *our* prayers are not always granted ?

43. 'One of the twelve' ; Matthew, Mark and Luke all add this. In a certain sense the traitor's footfall must have been a welcome sound ; so full of anguish was the scene thus terminated.

44-52. See Matt. xxvi. 47-56.

53-64. See Matt. xxvi. 57-64.

65. See Matt. xxvi. 67.

66-72. See Matt. xxvi. 69-75.

68. One of the solemn lessons of Peter's fall is this, how deeply we may stain our souls in one unguarded hour ! How many have found that a moment may wreck a life ! In well-doing we need the patient continuance of a lifetime ; in evil-doing we may blight many destinies beside our own, in the space of time during which we draw a single breath. O our Father, keep us moment by moment for Christ's sake. Amen.

CHAPTER XV.

1. SEE Matt. xxvii. 1, 2.

2-5. Matt. xxvii. 11-14.

6-9. Matt. xxvii. 15-26.

20-47. Matt. xxvii. 27-66.

22. Calvary is the Latin, Golgotha the Hebrew name, for 'the place of a skull.' Stanley says that there seems no sufficient ground for describing it as *Mount* Calvary. (See Smith's 'Dictionary of the Bible').

32. No terrors of approaching death can change the impenitent heart.

44. His previous sufferings, and His untold mental anguish, would naturally cause exhaustion, and so hasten death.

CHAPTER XVI.

1. SEE Matt. xxviii. 1.

2. Salome was doubtless the mother of the sons of Zebedee. See Matt. xxvii. 56, and Mark xv. 40.

3. 'Who shall roll,' etc. How often *we* perplex ourselves about difficulties that never arise! How natural was the query, as natural as that of Elisha's servant (2 Kings vi. 15). If we do but go forward, as these noble women did, an unseen path opens for us. True, the difficulty was far beyond their strength; but they went on in simple, loving, all-conquering faith, and God honoured it, as He always does.

4. See Matt. xxviii. 2.

5. 'A young man,' in the bloom of a life that shall never know decay; probably he looks no older now than then. Here we begin to die when we begin to live; *there* is the life immortal.

6-8. See Matt. xxviii. 5-8.

7. 'And Peter'; only Mark adds this.

9-11. Mary Magdalene found them 'mourning and weeping,' and they disbelieved her tidings. At the moment when His words touching His resurrection would have been all-consoling,

they were utterly forgotten. Yet their disbelief is important testimony, taken in connection with their subsequent faith, for which they laid down life itself.

12-13. See Luke's graphic account of this memorable walk. No wonder the two disciples met the Master, of Whom their loving hearts were so full. Probably they were going home to Emmaus after the Passover. No matter for the darkness and the distance (seven miles and a half); back that same night they returned, to tell their wondrous tale. Richly was their love rewarded, for, as they were telling it, 'He Himself stood in the midst of them' (Luke xxiv. 36). The Saviour's interview with Simon, named by the eleven, is nowhere described. It may well have been too sacred to be dwelt upon. Between every believing soul and God, deeper things lie hidden in broken words, and sighs, and tears, than could be told to human ear; you know this, if you know Jesus.

14. Only Mark records this well-deserved rebuke for their disbelief in His resurrection.

15. See Matt. xxviii. 19.

16. Notice that baptism, which is '*generally* necessary to salvation,' is named once; faith twice.

17-18. These 'signs' are only mentioned by Mark. Give instances of the fulfilment of most of them in the Acts. Doddridge says that the promise of protection from poison was specially needed, in an age in which poisoners abounded. This promise was fulfilled to every one of the Apostles. It is remarkable that Mahomet was poisoned when this crime was less common.

19. Christ's last walk was to Bethany, where, in the very act of blessing, 'He parted from them, and was carried up into heaven.' Only once before on earth was any such sight beheld, and that probably by one spectator only, when the fiery chariot came for Elijah. Enoch's translation was most likely unseen by mortal eye; for the expression 'he was not found,' implies that search was made for him. Psa. xxiv. plainly refers to Christ's ascension. The last scene of all, ere

the disciples returned, was the appearance of two angels (Acts i. 10, 11). Mark says that 'the Lord Jesus sat down at the right hand of God.'

20. The Acts are an expansion of this verse. Matt. xxviii. 20 says, 'I am with you alway.' In *this* we conquer; we are *not alone*. Christ, Who is our life, is with us in earth's toilsome journey, and in the calm hush of death. Amen, so be it, Lord.

ST. LUKE.

PRELIMINARY REMARKS.

LUKE, 'the beloved physician,' was probably a Jewish proselyte; this is inferred from the Hebraisms in his writings, and from his minute knowledge of Jewish rites. Mention any other inspired book opening with a preface. The earliest preaching was, as we find in the Acts, a summary of the leading facts of Christ's history; but of these uninspired documents not one survives, they were gradually superseded by the four Gospels, as sunrise supersedes all artificial lights. In the four Gospels we have the charter of Christianity. The Evangelists begin from different points. Matthew, with Christ's birth; Luke, with that of the Baptist, the earliest starting point; Mark and John, with the Baptist's ministry, followed by that of Christ.

CHAPTER I.

1-4. SEE Acts i. 1. 'Most excellent,' or most noble—a title of rank, not of character; twice applied in the Acts to Felix, once to Festus. Theophilus, 'lover of God,' was doubtless a person of high official position. 'Know the certainty,' like the Bereans (Acts xvii. 11).

5. Herod the Great.

6. 'Righteous before God': all other kinds of righteousness are utterly worthless.

7. Childless, like Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah, Elkanah and Hannah, Manoah and his wife. Mention other instances in Scripture of long-deferred hopes. When we read life's story aright, we shall thank God for our times of waiting.

8, 9. He was not the high priest; he was chosen by lot to burn incense, which the high priest did by official right.

10. 'Praying without'—helping together by supplication. The men and women in separate courts, the altar visible to all.

11. 'The right side'; i.e. the favourable side.

12. 'Troubled'—at the messenger of good tidings, sent at a moment when he was busy in his appointed work.

13. He had still continued to ask this blessing, perhaps from secret presentiment. 'Thy wife Elisabeth.' The message was for her too; no second wife, no handmaid, was to be the Baptist's mother. Her name, her circumstances, were well known to Gabriel; and if to Gabriel, how much more to God? Perhaps in *her* heart hope had been long dead, or laid down a willing sacrifice to Him Who often grants us our desire just when we resign it and our all to our Father's keeping. John, or Johanan in the Old Testament. means 'Jehovah's gracious gift,' or 'the grace or favour of the Lord.'

14. See Luke i. 58-66.

15. A Nazarite, like Samson and Samuel.

16-17. Both Elijah and John lived in evil times. How pitifully Elijah prayed for death, little dreaming of the fiery chariot that was to take him home!

18. A few doubting words cost him many months' silence.

19, 20. Gabriel, God's messenger on each occasion where we read of him.

21. The people wondered at his long delay, since the priest, it is said, usually remained only half an hour in the temple.

22, 23. Yet more must they have wondered at his silence and his 'signs.' The word translated 'dumb,' means 'deaf and dumb'; see verse 62 (Lonsdale and Hale). Notwithstanding his calamity, his ministrations in the Temple were fulfilled; he was not disqualified for burning incense.

24, 25. Doubtless those five months were passed with God, in the outpourings of a deeply thankful heart.

26, 27. 'Joseph, of the house of David.' See Matt. i. 16.

28, 29. The Vulgate* mistakenly renders the angelic salutation, 'Hail, Mary, full of grace'; and the Roman Catholic Church has abundantly profited by this mistranslation. 'Cast in her mind'; *i.e.* pondered. Well she might! No weightier communication was ever made since our first parents were driven out of Eden.

30. 'Fear not'; the usual beginning of angelic messages in the New Testament.

31-33. See the sublime words of Isaiah, vii. 14, and ix. 6, 7.

34. Contrast Mary's faith with the unbelief of Zacharias in a matter which required far less faith. 'John Baptist was wonderfully born,' but the Incarnation is the mystery of all ages. Yet Mary takes the grand fact as a certainty; her 'how' does not imply doubt, but a desire for information; nor does she ask a 'sign.'

35. Even to *her* no explanation can be given; it is 'the mystery of Christ.' Notwithstanding this, the word 'overshadow' implies how gently, how tenderly, she would be dealt with; as if in that solemn hour when the Holy Ghost should come upon her, He would 'cover her with His feathers,' hide her 'under the shadow of His wing.'

36. An *unsought* sign, to encourage her faith.

37. 'With God all things are possible' (Matt. xix. 26).

38. Sweet trustful answer! She had just heard what would change her whole life-history, setting her apart from all women who ever lived. Yet no words escape her but such as breathe profound humility and faith. She that humbled herself was exalted! At an announcement infinitely less wonderful Sarah laughed; but Mary said, 'Behold the handmaid of the Lord.' Popery has, in a certain sense, lowered her, by exalting her above her Lord; so that we are almost in danger of falling into the opposite error, that of loving and honouring her less than is her due. If grief and anger *could* enter heaven, she would grieve over the Mariolatry of Rome.

* A very ancient Latin version of the Scriptures, the only one considered authentic by the Romish Church.

39, 40. Transported with joy at the announcement to herself, and the tidings of Elisabeth, she hastened to the hill-country, eighteen miles south of Jerusalem, to the house of the aged pair. To place herself under their care was the wisest step she could have taken.

41-44. Doubtless Mary had kept the angel's visit a secret from all; yet Elisabeth is inspired to call her, not 'Our Lady,' as the Romanists do, but 'the mother of my Lord.' How beautiful is her freedom from envy! She loses sight of herself altogether, in her burst of joy over Mary.

45. Yes, and it is true still, as true now as ever it was, that 'blessed is she that believeth.' Trust *yourselves*, and you will fail; trust *men*, and they will fail you in the hour of utmost need, trust *God*, and you will find in all life's contingencies how safely He *may* be trusted. In this benediction on Mary's faith, there may be a delicate allusion to her own husband's unbelief.

46-55. Compare Hannah's song. Notice many points of resemblance; both speak of God's goodness as the wonderful working of that great law by which He puts down the mighty and exalts the lowly. In both songs the strain leads up to Christ; in Hannah's as Jehovah's King, in Mary's as the promised Help.

48, 49. Mary never dreamed of her own so called 'immaculate conception'; all her thought was of the great things that God wrought for her.

50-54. 'Unto generations,' etc. 'Our fathers, where are they?' Yet the mercy that followed them through their pilgrim life, follows their children through all time—if we are God's—like 'the brook in the way' (Psa. cx. 7). A century hence we shall be but a name to our descendants; but *we* shall live, and our works will follow us. And even when we are a name no longer known to one being upon earth, they will follow us still, and for ever. 'The hungry,' etc. See Matt. v. 6. Do *I* hunger? If so, for what? 'The rich,' etc. (James v. 1). Name Scripture examples of rich men who were, or were not, 'sent empty away.' Explain *why* in both cases.

55. The most glorious of all promises had its fulfilment now.

56. Honoured roof that sheltered two such women, whose offspring, one the pioneer of the other, have made the world new. After this occurred the events mentioned Matt. i. 18-25.

57-60. Now came the fulfilment of Elisabeth's hope and longing. The law of circumcision must be observed on the eighth day, even if it were a Sabbath. The name was commonly given on the same day.

61. This verse, and verse 59, both show how old a custom it is to perpetuate family names. We find, however, no instance of it in the Old Testament.

62. What a world of silence he must have dwelt in for all those months! and how suddenly he entered it, at the angel's words! The leading events of life are generally sudden, as *we* see them, though God's Providence may have been long working that way—silently, as He does work. Thus it often happens with life's last, greatest event—its close.

63, 64. A 'writing tablet' being inscribed with the name 'John,' the tablet was instantly removed—its work was done; so, too, when our will has yielded to God, life's heaviest weights sometimes fall off as in a moment.

65. 'Fear'; *i.e.* religious, reverential awe, arising from the conviction that a Divine Hand was in it all. The case of Zacharias illustrates 'the goodness and severity of God' (Rom. xi. 22): His severity in the prompt sharp punishment of unbelief; His goodness in the assurance (verse 20) that it would be temporary; and in the complete restoration. A great joy often needs the counterpoise of sorrow; but not so with the joy of our Father's House.

66. 'The Hand of the Lord,' etc; specially marking him out. How his mother must have wondered in what way God's plan for him would be carried out! Happy for her that she could not foresee that his saintly head would be borne to the insulting hands of Herodias. When that did happen, she, from her place of rest in Paradise, would feel only deep thankfulness that he had a martyr's honoured death, and one so

swift as to be almost painless. Things look very different indeed when we reach 'the other side.' The 'mirror,' through which we now see 'darkly,' obscures yet more than it reveals, because we are incapable of higher knowledge.

67-79. Glorious hymn of praise! Notice how, till verse 76, Zacharias loses sight of his own child, never mentions him. The aged pair were kindred spirits after all.

68. 'Visited': after long absence, and a silence of more than 400 years, since the Old Testament Scripture closed. In the old time, God chiefly 'visited' in judgment; in the New Testament, in mercy.

69. 'Horn of salvation'; i.e. strength. The metaphor is taken from those animals whose strength is in their horns (Num. xxiii. 22). 'Unicorn': probably rhinoceros. See the allusion to Mary's descent from David.

70-75. Show, from the various books of Scripture, how this prophecy runs through the whole Bible. Who *are* our enemies?

76, 77. Even here, when, in the sweet dying echoes of this noble song, Zacharias addresses the babe, he does not allude to him as his child. He does not say, 'And thou, my son,' though the unsealed lips might have yearned to utter those tender words, for the first time in his long childless life. He addresses him as the prophet of the most High—His fore-runner.

78, 79. '*Tender* mercy'; like the beautiful words (Psa. cvii. 43), '*loving* kindness'—'the way of peace.' Peace is Christ's legacy; have *we* a part in it? or does every little breeze of trouble ruffle us?

80. A few strokes full of grandeur, showing John's development, and his hard, solitary life and training in the wilderness. Moses, in the desert, had home, and wife, and children; but John's was a sterner lot, with no kindred ties when his aged parents passed away. No matter for those hardships now, after eighteen centuries in Paradise! One hour there will make up for a life's troubles. I feel as sure of it as if I had spent one such blest hour, and come back to tell you. You

ask how can we realise the unseen? Suppose you receive a letter, telling you that your parents are removing to a beautiful new home in a country quite unknown to you. You will soon be able to picture it from their description; and because you know so well, and love so dearly, those whose presence makes any place home to you. That is just how I feel; and nothing in the whole world so brightens and gilds this mortal life, as the sense that we are daily nearing the Paradise of God. Thanks unspeakable to Him Who gives us this 'hope full of immortality'!

CHAPTER II.

1-7. NOTICE God's overruling Hand. Christ must be born at Bethlehem (Micah v. 2), but His parents dwelt at Nazareth; and a heathen emperor's command that his subjects should be enrolled, or registered, was the means of fulfilling the prophecy. 1 Sam. xvi. 1 shows that Jesse, from whose son, David, Mary was descended, was a Bethlehemite. The angel had not said where Christ was to be born, and Micah's prophecy was dark before the event, though clear as a sunbeam after it. She would journey very unwillingly at such a season—probably she hoped to return home before her hour arrived; or Joseph, a just and thoughtful husband, would have provided some lodging for her at Bethlehem. Willing, or otherwise, she had to obey the order of Augustus. 'Every creature walks blindfold: only He that dwells in light knows whither they go.' (Bishop Hall.) Find instances of this—Joseph, Jochebed, Ruth, etc. We have each a double history—that of our outer and of our inner life. Trace a guiding Hand in both.

2. A perplexing verse. Cyrenius, or Quirinius, was not governor till ten years later. It was the levying of the tax which caused the insurrection mentioned (Acts v. 37). Probably the enrolment was made with a view to the actual levying of the tax at a later period.

3. Joseph and Mary were now living together (Matt. i. 24).

4, 5. Both had to attend in person; Mary had probably some small possession of her own.

6, 7. Had she none to aid her, that she herself 'wrapped Him'? etc.—'no room for them in the inn!' Fit emblem of His reception among men. Fancy the rude footsteps coming and going where He lay! Have *we* given Him the guest-chamber in our hearts?

8. And now came His first visitors. The flocks lay out all night from April till the end of autumn, which seems to show that the time fixed for Christ's birth is too late in the year. Doubtless these shepherds were among those who waited for His coming, or they would not have had this wondrous honour. God prepares His servants for what is coming. Give instances of this—Nathanael, John in the Isle of Patmos, etc.

9, 10. The shepherds, watching three hours in turn, saw a sudden glory; and an angel—probably Gabriel—said, 'Be not afraid.'

11. 'Born to you,' etc. Ah! there are harmonies from redeemed voices in heaven that angels cannot reach! It is a 'Birth,' born from Eternity into Time. How exact the details—'This day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord'! This is the only place where these words occur—Christ Jehovah.

12. The 'sign' was to be the startling contrast between what they heard of Him, and what they would see when they found Him. It was very needful thus to prepare them.

13-14. Like a grand chorus taking up some noble strain as it dies away on one thrilling solo, so here Gabriel's voice ceases, and a multitude of angels take up the strain 'Glory to God,' etc. Then perhaps follows in softer cadence 'on earth peace.' Sweet, holy word, how this storm-tossed world needs it, yearns for it! May we be counted worthy one day to join that blessed choir where no note ever jars.

15. These men of prepared hearts say in simple faith, 'let us now go and see'; not 'let one or two go to inquire.'

16. They go with haste, leaving their sheep with as little

anxiety as the woman of Samaria left her water-pot; nor would one defenceless lamb be missing on their return. They trusted their sole possession to His care, and He visibly helps all who do this. Very likely the helpless sheep thus cast upon His faithfulness had some angel watcher that night, nor would he deem his humble mission a waste of time. It is only *we* who murmur over lowly duties, and want to do some great thing. Meanwhile the shepherds, mysteriously guided through the night, found the babe lying in the manger.

17. 'Made known,' etc. they were the first Evangelists.

18. 'Wondered.' Probably in many cases it was *only* wonder; in others there was a far deeper insight into what it meant.

19. Truly these things must have touched the deepest springs of the deep fountain of mother-love in Mary's heart. Who can understand what He, Who was at once her Son and her Lord, must have been to her?

20. Well might they return 'glorifying,' etc.

21-24. The only record of Christ's circumcision. At this point the opening verses of Matt. ii. take up the thread of the history, and Luke resumes it, verse 22, or else it may be that Mary's purification took place just before the arrival of the Magi, whose costly gifts would have enabled her to offer a lamb instead of the turtle-doves. Being a first-born son, they bring Him to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord, as was required in memory of the deliverance of the first-born of Israel through the sprinkling of blood. The facts of the Gospel-story are far more to us than the exact order in which they occurred.

25. It is possible to be upright towards men without being devout towards God, but to be really devout includes both. 'The Consolation,' etc., one of Christ's beautiful names. Mention a good many.

26. 'The Lord's Christ,' another of His dear names. The Lord's Christ, but *our* Saviour. It had been revealed to Simeon that he should not die till he had seen Christ.

27. The Spirit guided him into the Temple just as Christ was brought there.

28. Without waiting to hear from Mary what had happened, he at once received the babe into his arms in unhesitating faith.

29. 'Now lettest Thou,' etc. Till now God's aged servant had waited His command to depart: since his great object in life was accomplished, most likely the call soon came. This may have been his last visit to the Temple: 'in peace,' inward and outward peace, peace unutterable, the peace of God.

30. 'Mine eyes,' etc. Many saw Christ who never saw His salvation.

31, 32. This pathetic song, taking leave of earth, ends in glorious prophecy and holiest joy, taking a wider range than that of Zacharias.

33-35. 'Falling and rising again' of Peter, and of many who rejected Him while living, and turned to Him after the wondrous day of Pentecost; 'yea, and a sword,' etc., pointing to the anguish through which she would pass.

36, 37. Miriam, Deborah, and in Josiah's reign, Huldah, the wife of Shallum, were prophetesses. Give particulars about them, and find an allusion to the four daughters of Philip. Which Philip? Anna, or Hannah, was another prophetess. She must have been more than a century old, a wife for seven years, a widow for eighty-four. Were heaven not the home of eternal youth, how strange must have been the meeting between Hannah and the young husband of her girlhood, who had gone there such a multitude of years before her!

38. 'Coming up at that very hour,' perhaps by inward guidance, though doubtless she was there continually; it was the home of her heart.

39. Probably the next events were the flight into Egypt, and the slaughter of the babes.

40. See Luke i. 80, 'filled with wisdom.' How deep the mystery of His two-fold nature! St. Paul gives us a glimpse of it in the words 'He *learned* obedience.' 'The grace of God,' *i.e.* the visible impress of God's favour.

41-52. Our one solitary glimpse of Him from infancy to manhood.

41. Only males were *required* to go, but devout women also went at times.

42. A marked age among the Jews ; at twelve a special course of instruction began, and boys were set to learn a trade.

43. The Passover ended, they returned home ; worship must give place to work. Happily for us, who would serve our Master always, praying, working or resting, there is worship *in* work, and in rest too, taken thankfully as His gift ; so everything we have to do may bring us nearer to our God ; it is our fault if it does not.

44. They went in groups to the great festivals, for safety and companionship.

45, 46. They had gone a day's journey before they missed Him ; they sought Him from company to company the next day, and found Him in the Temple on the third day. Perhaps His questions resembled those that overwhelmed the scribes and Pharisees in after years.

47. Well might they marvel at such a pupil !

48. The first recorded sentence that Mary addressed to Him. 'Son' would seem to have been her name for Him ; 'thy father,' *i.e.* Joseph.

49. He owns no Father but God, and seems to imply that they should have understood Him better.

50, 51. Henceforth Joseph appears no more in any of the Gospels. The next we hear is of 'His mother and His brethren,' whence we infer that Joseph was dead. This was certainly the case before the crucifixion. How do we know it ? 'He went down,' etc. Notice His filial obedience, and observe the plural pronoun. One of the worst signs of our times is the self-willed independence of the young, the way in which they often speak of their parents. The words of one generation are sometimes the deeds of the next.

52. This is all we know of Christ's life from twelve to thirty. What years of loving service, of holy communings with God, they must have been ! Those eighteen years fix character almost beyond the probability of altering it. How

will *you* spend those golden years? Will you not from this time say, 'My Father, Thou art the Guide of my youth'? (Jer. iii. 4.) May the Holy Spirit make this the cry of your heart; remember, you must be *in earnest* about religion. Remember that now is the acceptable time. Come *now*, whilst He waits to bless you, and that blessing shall hallow all your after life.

CHAPTER III.

1. THE fifteenth year of Tiberius, reckoning from the time of his admission to a share of the power, three years before the death of Augustus. 'Pilate, governor,' etc.; little thinking then of the crucial test to be applied to him in a few brief years. 'Herod,' too, had not yet filled up the measure of his sins by beheading John and setting at nought the Son of God. 'Philip' was another son of Herod the Great, and much superior to the forsaken husband of Herodias. His father had two sons called Philip, or Herod Philip.

2. 'The word of God came.' Such expressions are never used of Him in whom the Godhead dwelt.

3-14. See Matt. iii. 1-12.

3. After the prophecies respecting John, and his wonderful birth, it is remarkable how short his mission was. How little we hear of his work except in this chapter, and the corresponding passages in other Gospels. Life, however, cannot be reckoned by years. Some who die in youth have *lived* longer, more fully, than others who reach fourscore. No slothful person really *lives*; he breathes, eats, sleeps, and dies, and earth has one cumbrer less. No one misses him when he is gone, and no place is found for him where God's workers *rest*. Are *we* living?

11. Compare this with 1 Cor. xiii. 3. Christian liberality is an evidence of spiritual life, not a means of obtaining it.

12-14. Only Luke gives these details. The renunciation of the besetting sin is the required test. Were he preaching to *us*, what would he say? To one it would be 'Judge not'; to another, 'Be content to take the lowest room—humble your-

self'; to another, 'Be not sluggish'; to some he would preach 'repentance'; to others, 'pardon and peace through Christ.'

15. 'Baptize with fire'; *i.e.* fiery trials that discipline God's children, till we can say, 'Thy *rod* and Thy staff they comfort me.' It was a blessed day in my life when, in the midst of deep anguish, I learnt to understand that text, and felt the comfort of God's *rod*.

18. 'Many other exhortations' (John i. 29-36).

19, 20. See Matt. xiv. 3, 4. 'Added yet this,' as the crowning sin, ending in murder. What an awful day will it be when He says to the persecutors of His children, 'Ye did it unto *Me*.'

21, 22. See on Matt. iii. 13-17. Christ was baptized alone *after* the crowd. In His baptism, as in His sepulchre, He would be separated from sinners.

23-38. See on Matt. i. 17.

23. Probably 'Joseph, the son of Heli,' means his son-in-law, Mary's husband. Matthew, writing for Jews, traces the descent to Abraham only; Luke, writing for Gentiles, traces it to Adam; a most marvellous genealogy.

31. Mary and Joseph were descended from different sons of David—Nathan and Solomon. Find particulars of Nathan.

32. Give a brief account of Jesse, Obed, Boaz.

34. Read the brief mention, in Genesis, of Terah and Nahor. How was Abraham related to them?

36, 37. Two of the Patriarchs are called Cainan. Who were they?

38. How grand the closing words, 'The son of Adam, the son of God.' *Are* you God's children? If you did but realise how He loves you! May the Holy Spirit show you this precious truth, and seal you His for ever! Amen.

CHAPTER IV.

1-13. SEE Matt. iv. 1-11.

14-32. A hiatus between verses 13 and 14 is filled up by several of the early chapters in St. John, ending iv. 54.

16. 'Stood up,' etc. Others besides Rabbis were allowed to address the congregation. See Acts xiii. 15. It was Christ's custom to be present.

17, 18. To dwell upon His sufferings in this opening discourse, would have been premature ; He dwells, therefore, on His sublime mission. Who are the poor, the captives, the blind, the bruised, or, as it means here, *crushed* ? Find promises for each. How does sin crush ? It crushes hope, happiness, every noble aspiration and earnest purpose ; it crushes the very soul.

19. 'The year of Jubilee.' The quotation from Isa. lxi. 1, 2, ends before the clause, 'the day of vengeance.' This was only for those who rejected Him. This illustrates the way in which He *draws* us.

20. 'The attendant' : the synagogue officers. 'The eyes of all were fastened on Him.' Beautiful words ! Are *our* eyes fastened on Him ? If so, we shall be helped through all straits and difficulties. Many of us look to Him for a moment, and then look on the surrounding difficulties, just as Peter looked on the waves and began to sink. This is why prayer sometimes seems to help us so little. May our eyes be so fastened on Him, that we may look to Him through the mist of earth's perplexity with unshaken, happy trust. We must look to Him in our work ; in every minute detail of it, studying what will please Him best. We must look to Him in our rest, even in our recreations. In all life's uncertainties our eyes must *wait* upon Him, watching the slightest indication of His will. In the dark hour of temptation, oh ! look to Him Who 'Himself hath *suffered*, being tempted.'

21. His address seems to have been the application of this and other passages to Himself.

22. Human lips often speak wise words that fall idly on the careless ear, but *He* could give wisdom ; human lips speak vain and fruitless comfort, which the aching heart rejects, but *He* giveth *peace*, for His words are 'words of grace.'

23. His choice of a residence at Capernaum, rather than at

Nazareth, wounded the pride of the Nazarenes—for whom He did few mighty works, because of their want of faith. Unbelief cannot limit God's power, but it precludes His showing it towards *us*.

24. He replies to one proverb by another.

25-27. These miracles were wrought on heathens, not on Jews. 'Zarephath': a heathen village between Tyre and Sidon.

28. We find a similar outburst at the mention of the heathen in Acts xxii. 21, 22.

29, 30. Casting down headlong was no uncommon punishment. The Romans flung criminals from the Tarpeian rock. 'Passed through,' miraculously.

31, 32. His word was with power, being received in faith. Have *you* felt the power of Christ's words?

33-37. Mark i. 23-28.

38, 39. Matt. viii. 14, 15.

40, 41. Blessed healing touch! The devils testified to Christ, that He and they might seem to the multitude to be of one party. Remember that the vileness of evil spirits came upon them little by little. Just as pride, or temper, at last writes itself indelibly on the countenance, so was the brand of sin ineffaceably stamped on them.

42-44. 'Stayed Him'; *i.e.* sought to keep Him; but His Father's work required many a weary journey.

CHAPTER V.

1-11. THESE verses describe the miraculous draught of fishes, and the third call of Peter, James, and John. Their first call is described (John i. 35-42); their second call in Matt. iv. 18-22. These calls were evidently progressive; each time they made greater sacrifices to follow Christ. Trace this out carefully. How often has He called *us*? and what sacrifice have we made for Him?

3. 'Asked': not commanded. His example was closely followed by Paul, in his letter to Philemon (verse 8-10). If a

word—a look—will guide or restrain, words of authority and power may be kept in reserve for the self-willed and disobedient. Our resources, both moral and physical, are limited ; we must waste none of them.

4. Notice the recompense for Peter's loan of the boat, and his faith and obedience.

5. 'Toiled all the night—took nothing.' So many say, who watch for souls ; but the morning cometh, and brings rich return.

6, 7. Their net was *beginning* to break, as their ships were *beginning* to sink ; the precious draught came safe to land.

8. Did Peter wish Christ to go ? No ; his all was wrapt up in Him. See Isa. vi. 5.

9. Well might they wonder ! The time of day ; the success after failure ; the miraculous abundance, where just before not a fish could be taken.

10. On the former occasion, He had promised to make them '*fishers of men*' ; now they were to *catch* men. How wondrously fulfilled (Acts ii. 41) !

11. 'Left all.' What ! leave this rich supply ! Yes ; they left *all for Christ*—fish, net, ship, relatives. After the crucifixion, they were again at their fisherman's work, while awaiting the day of Pentecost. Till a higher duty calls, fulfil a lower one—the one that lies nearest ; let the duty of the moment be all your care.

12-15. See on Matt. viii. 2-4. How little can we realise what these poor lepers, of whom we read in the Gospels, must have suffered, were it only in being objects of fear and loathing ! How can we murmur at life's small cares and frets, when we think of *them* ? Once there were lepers in England : there are lepers' windows in old churches, where they were allowed to stand and listen. This fearful disease still prevails in the East ; there have been confirmations for lepers only. This sufferer fell at Christ's feet, not daring to hope for His *touch* ; but He found no suppliant repulsive, though *we* often do.

13. Contrast the prompt 'I will,' with the delays in some other cases. Why ?

16. Prayer must have seemed a brief going Home. When *you* pray, do you seem to be speaking to a stranger, or to a tried Friend ?

17-26. See Matt. ix. 1-8.

17. Pharisees and doctors, etc. The presence of these men was the highest testimony yet borne to our Lord's growing influence ; they evidently thought it necessary to know what His teaching was.

18. 'They *sought*' to lay him before Jesus. Are *we* trying to bring our dear ones to Him, taking pains and trouble about it ?

19. The bed had borne the man ; now the man shall carry the bed.

27-32. See Matt. ix. 9-13.

27. 'Follow Me.' Have *you* heard this voice ? Do *you* feel the constraining power of the love of Christ ?

33-39. See Matt. ix. 14-17.

35. Something in this sorrowful prediction recalls the wonderfully pathetic close of Psa. 88—'lover and friend,' etc. Our very familiarity with Scripture in early childhood makes us fail to see the marvellous power and pathos of many passages, until we look into them carefully. 'Then will they fast,' etc. How amply fulfilled in St. Paul's experience of 'hunger and thirst, cold and nakedness' (2 Cor. xi. 27) !

36. Raw unwrought cloth that would contract, and so tear the old material.

CHAPTER VI.

1-5. SEE Matt. xii. 1-8.

6-11. See Matt. xii. 9-15.

8. 'Knew their thoughts.' Those around us often fancy that they can read our thoughts ; but they generally altogether misread them. The longer you live, the less you will think yourselves able to read that sealed volume—the human heart—which is open only to Him Who made it.

12. 'Continued all night in prayer.' What an example to teach us to seek special help for special work ! The work now

awaiting Him was the choice of His twelve Apostles. The reason that prayer sometimes helps us so little is, that we expect so little help from it. When we post a letter, we count upon its reaching the person addressed. Why do we not exercise the same trust with respect to prayer? It will be one of heaven's glad surprises to learn the blessed results of what we now call our unanswered prayers.

13-16. See Matt. x. 2-4. It is full of interest to observe the glimpses that Scripture gives us of the varied characters of these holy men; the fiery Peter, the loving John, the guileless Nathanael, the desponding Thomas. As great are the diversities in human character now.

17. This was not the sermon on the Mount, which was spoken before the calling of the Apostles, and was far longer; the locality was different, and this discourse contains woes as well as beatitudes.

18. These evil spirits trouble us in a different way. How?

20. Not blessed *because* they were poor, but because they lovingly accepted their lot as God's will.

21. Sanctified affliction yields blessed fruit. It humbles us, shows us that this disappointing world is not our rest, not our ultimate goal, which

‘At some time, His good time, we shall reach.’

We cannot see how we ripen and mellow under trial, sanctified by the Holy Spirit, but we believe that ‘whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth,’ and we take all the rest ‘on trust a little while.’

‘The path of sorrow, and that path alone,
Leads to the land where sorrow is unknown.’

How beautiful the expression, ‘Ye shall laugh.’ A bright ecstasy of holy gladness of which we can form no conception.

22. ‘For the Son of Man's sake.’ There lies the blessedness!

23. ‘Leap for joy.’ Words seem hardly strong enough to typify the glory awaiting Christ's faithful servants. May we be faithful to Him, even unto death!

24-26. 'Rich, full, laugh.' These have their portion in this life—and what hereafter? See Luke xvi. 25. How well is it for us that God loves His children too well to spare the rod if needed! What must it be to hunger and thirst for ever for joy and satisfaction, and all in vain? We, like Asaph (Psa. lxxiii. 3), marvel at the prosperity of the wicked, the long years of wealth and ease that they often enjoy; but we *need* not wonder: they are having now all the good that will ever come to them. A few years hence, and what *then*?

The 26th is a verse full of instruction. We all like to be thought highly of, and the esteem of the upright is precious; but when all men speak well of us, the foolish as well as the wise, we should tremble for ourselves. Praise raises a mist before the eyes; we hardly see where we are going, and are apt to take some false step, perhaps to stumble and fall. When friends praise us, we think that we *are* what they believe us to be, and that they do us justice, quite forgetting to look for the shadows in the picture that men call bright and fair. When others are looking upon the brightness, we should look into ourselves for the shades.

27-36. See Matt. v. 39-48.

28. 'Pray for them.' So did Christ pray for His murderers, and Stephen for his.

29, 30. We must take these words in the spirit, not in the letter; and show in every possible way a readiness to forbear and forgive, to help and comfort, as need requires.

31. This is the golden rule; you cannot follow it too closely.

32, 33. None are faultless. In all there are dormant possibilities of good, however deeply a sinner may have fallen. Prove both these statements from Scripture.

37, 38. See Matt. vii. 1, 2.

38. Sometimes the reward comes, even here. 'Men give into our bosom' what we have given them; but we must set this altogether aside as a *motive* for showing kindness. Our best actions, our greatest sacrifices for others, often win no earthly recompense, not even loving gratitude; but we must

leave all in God's Hand—His balances are wonderfully just. Notice the marginal reference to Neh. v. 13, on the words 'Give into your bosom,' *i.e.* a fold in the garment, which served as a pocket.

39. See Matt. xv. 14.

40. The perfection of our training under a blind guide can only issue in our common ruin.

41, 42. See Matt. vii. 3-5. How much worse other people's faults seem to us than our own! There are many *excuses* for ourselves, which we take little pains to find for *them*. Charity (*to ourselves*) covers a multitude of shortcomings; but where is our charity for another's failings? O Holy Spirit, open our eyes to our real character before God! Teach us to know ourselves, and to know Jesus!

43-45. See Matt. vii. 16-20.

45. 'The good treasure,' etc.; 'the evil treasure.' The heart is the great storehouse. Out of it comes the fruit of the lips and of the life, everything in which one man differs from another. What am *I* storing in *my* heart? The seed of the eternal harvest is in all our hearts at this moment; in all nature the produce corresponds with the seed. Oh! do give your young lives to Jesus, whilst His tender arms are open to receive you!

46-49. See Matt. vii. 21-27.

48. No; for it rested firmly on the immovable Rock, and that Rock was Christ! Are *you* building on that one only foundation? Look well to it; even now, for some of us, the wind may be rising, the waves swelling, the flood rolling on. A rock is not always, not often, an emblem of safety. A ship driven upon a rock perishes; so those who reject Christ rush upon their own destruction.

CHAPTER VII.

1-10. SEE Matt. viii. 5-13.

1. Capernaum, a town in Galilee.

2. 'Dear unto him.' How rare now is this happy state of

things! Formerly, a servant entered a family in her youth, and, unless she married, stayed there all her life, cared for in old age by the children or grandchildren of her first master, who had regarded her as a trusted friend. We see this strong tie between employer and employed in the time of Abraham and his steward, Eliezer of Damascus. The greetings between Boaz and his reapers indicate the same tone of thought and feeling. The great want of the present day in this respect is mutual sympathy and consideration between mistress and servant, master and subordinate. The centurion makes his servant's trouble his own.

3. His sending the Jewish elders to intercede with Christ was not unnatural; but, as a rule, suppliants came in person, and it was well they did. Who could have pleaded for the Syrophœnician girl as her *mother* did? Thank God for the unspeakable privilege of coming direct to Jesus as He bids us! Some day, we who come now, pleading, in the dark night of Time, to an unseen yet ever present Saviour, shall see Him face to face, and know as we are known.

4, 5. Precious testimony (Eccl. vii. 1). 'Built us our synagogue': such was the practical form that his love had taken. Love which takes no action is a poor useless counterfeit.

6, 7. The elders called him 'worthy'; he twice describes himself as '*not* worthy.' The estimate that others form of us often differs much from that which we form of ourselves. 'Lord, *trouble* not Thyself.' How little the Jews regarded the 'trouble' that Christ gave Himself, or that they caused Him! Just as little does the world care now for the toils of His followers—but there is *One* Who cares.

11. This is only told by Luke. Nain or Naim, two miles south of Mount Tabor, is a town, or perhaps only a village, in Galilee, near Endor. It is but once named in Scripture, and probably this may have been Christ's only visit to it. How mercifully timed! Doubtless He walked the twelve miles between Capernaum and Nain: how seldom we ponder the many weary steps He trod in this rough world! It is good to

ponder them, good to remember amidst this world's weariness that He was weary too ; let us realise more that He made Himself our 'brother' and our flesh. Any thought that brings us nearer to Him is a hallowed thought, and leaves its impress on our spirit.

12. By wise sanitary appointment, the dead were not buried within any Jewish towns ; this young man was therefore 'carried out.' The only exception to the rule was that the kings of the house of David were buried in the city of David. Notice the pathetic details, told so simply ; a widow's-only son. The daughter of Jairus was an only daughter, Lazarus, an only brother. Christ does not now give back our cherished dead, but He intimately knows all that they were to us ; and every glad Easter morning is a pledge to us that He is still 'the Resurrection and the Life.'

13. What is the difference between 'compassion' and pity ?

14. He 'touched the bier' ; anyone else doing so would have become ceremonially unclean, as those did who performed the last offices for the dead.

15. 'Began to speak.' In no instance are we told what they said, how they felt ; one almost hopes that they were caused to forget their brief glimpses of Paradise, or else what a disappointment to come back again from the true life there, to pass a second time through the dark valley !

16, 17. 'Visited His people,' where else do these words occur ? One of the most marvellous of the Old Testament miracles was that (2 Kings xiii. 20, 21) wrought by one dead man upon another, or rather by the direct agency of God.

18-35. See Matt. xi. 2-14.

29, 30. The multitude acknowledged the Divine wisdom in John's preparatory ministry as leading them to Christ ; but the Pharisees rejected the teaching of both.

36-38. There is no ground for supposing this woman to have been Mary Magdalene, nor do we know her name. The vessel that contained the perfume was an alabaster cruse, in some cases very costly, 'standing behind at His feet.' The people

of the East reclined at meals, leaning on the left elbow, their sandals taken off, their feet consequently bare. This makes the whole intelligible. Her tears bathed His feet, and she wiped them with the only towel at hand, her long tresses, after the custom of slaves, who thus dried their master's feet. 'Kiss' here means to kiss repeatedly. See verse 45. Much love, springing from much forgiveness, prompted her actions. We know not where she had met Christ before, or what words of His had wrought the change in her; perhaps she was among the publicans and sinners whom He gathered round Him, and now she could hide her feelings no longer.

39. Simon had perhaps invited Jesus to his house to arrive at some definite opinion about Him, but it was a most erroneous one.

40-43. Like Nathan with David, Christ veils His home-thrust under a parable—makes Simon himself pronounce upon the case. The debtor in one case owed ten times as much as the other, but both were alike insolvent; so was it with Simon and the woman: neither had anything at all 'where-with to pay,' and our case is just like theirs.

'Nothing in my hand I bring.'

We have literally nothing that we *can* pay; were we required to bring with us even the ten-thousandth part of the price of our salvation, where could we possibly find it? Come then empty-handed to your rich Saviour; give Him your hearts, and He will give you of His fulness. 'Forgave them,' blessed words for such as we! Human forgiveness is seldom absolutely perfect, except perhaps parental forgiveness, which is the truest type of God's. Between all other relatives some estrangement is apt to follow any grave and serious fault, especially if there be any touch of family disgrace in it; the offender, penitent, forgiven, still beloved, is possibly never fully trusted any more, till long years have tested him.

44-46. Was Simon forgiven? Notice his conduct, 'no water'; was this much love? was it any? Hot, dusty, wearied,

sandalled feet needed, and always had, this refreshment, but 'the Master' had it not. 'No kiss'; did this show love? 'No oil' for His sacred head, though this woman, loving much, brought precious ointment for His feet. Simon seems to have shown no love; probably we may infer that there had been no forgiveness. Christ seems *hurt* at his inattention, yet notice the delicate courtesy of His rebuke. Observe His appreciation of the woman's reverential love; such acts are never lost on Him; He still owns and prizes every gentle word spoken, or tender act performed, for His sake, to any of His little ones. Would that Simon had sought Christ's pardon for the neglect; but he seems to have missed the golden opportunity. Are *we* improving ours?

47. 'Her sins, which are many'—blessed parenthesis, how many broken hearts it has healed! Had it been the contrary, 'her sins, which are *few*,' how discouraging to burdened sinners! 'Her sins are forgiven, for she loved much.' Was her love, then, the cause of her forgiveness? Ah! no; in that case she would have had something to purchase it with. Understand this well. Her love was not the cause of her being forgiven, but the consequence of it; pardon came first, love afterwards. Christ has paid all in full, and therefore 'God is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins,' but unless the devoted loving service of our lives proves that *we* are Christ's, what part or lot have we in the infinite blessing of His atonement?

48. Sweet words of peace and healing! Has Christ ever breathed them in *your* ear, when you have humbly told Him of some secret fault, known only to your Saviour and yourself? Do you thus go to Him? How I pity the poor Romanist, taught to go with his sins to the priest, and with his wants to some dead man or woman; and the living, loving, tender Saviour waiting to be entreated, ready and willing to hear!

49. They saw that His forgiveness came with more than human authority, yet refused to believe that He was God.

50. Precious words, warm at her heart for evermore. Doubt-

less men and women whom she passed in the streets still gathered their garments closely round them, lest they should touch her, for the shadow of her past life must have followed her to the grave ; but we may be well-assured that henceforth she was Christ's only ; His through life to death, His in the peace and glory of God's Paradise. O Saviour, our own, our only Saviour, bring *us* thither when life's storms are past ! Amen.

CHAPTER VIII.

1-6. A GALILEAN circuit with the twelve, and certain faithful women. How do we know that He was now in Galilee ?

2. Mary Magdalene, probably from Magdala.

3. 'Joanna, the wife,' etc. If Chuza, Herod's steward, differed widely from his vile master, what a post his must have been ! Of 'Susanna,' we know only the name, and that on this journey she ministered to Christ. Notice the deep poverty of Him in Whom all fulness dwelt.

4-18. See Matt. xiii. 1-23.

15. 'An honest and good heart' ; *i.e.* a heart *prepared* by God.

16. See Matt. v. 15.

17. How true that is ! Concealment is only a question of time ; truth lasts for ever. It may be veiled and hidden for a season—like the sun under a black cloud : the cloud passes, and the sun is still there ; and we know that it always *was* there, though the cloud hid it.

18. To him who uses the grace he has, 'He giveth more grace' ; so, with wisdom, faith, love, peace, 'He giveth *more*,' to those who use these good gifts.

19-21. See Matt. xii. 46-50.

19. Mention other instances in which His mother's anxiety rather broke in on His work.

22-25. See Matt. viii. 23-27.

25. How often might Christ say to us, 'My child ! where was your faith when you were in that deep trial ? Could you trust the unseen Hand that led you through it all ?' Very likely the disciples secretly blamed Him for crossing in a

moment of such peril, thinking He might have foreseen or prevented it. We shall know in heaven why *we* are often led by rough paths, when easy ones seem to lie parallel.

26-39. See Matt. viii. 28-34.

27. 'There met Him,' etc. Ah! it is no chance-meeting when any one meets the Lord Jesus. The evil spirits would gladly have taken any road but that.

31. 'Into the abyss': the awful abyss of hell. How they dreaded their prison-house! and with what good reason! All other prisons must release their captives, living or dead; but these lost spirits, though permitted to leave it for a time, can taste of freedom no more at all for ever.

34. The preservation of the keepers was almost miraculous. How easily they might have been carried away in the rush of the swine, and precipitated into the sea!

35. How changed the demoniac's condition! Naked, he is now 'clothed'; his restless wanderings over, he is now 'sitting.' Sitting where? 'At the feet of Jesus.' Blessed resting-place! Have I found it? He was not *beside* Him, that joy comes not here, not now, but in the eternal future; and only those who now sit humble learners at His feet may hope for even the lowest place in His kingdom. 'Sitting' at the feet of some revered teacher is no uncommon expression in Scripture. St. Paul was brought up 'at the feet of Gamaliel.' Notice the expression 'in his right mind.' Before, every faculty was perverted to Satan's vile uses; *now*, he instantly brings his restored reason to Christ.

37. 'Holden with great fear.' Of Christ's supernatural power, or lest He should destroy *their* swine.

39. How plain the reason for this! Doubtless many who, through this man's agency, sought the Healer, found the Saviour too. Christ's journey was in no wise lost, such a witness being left behind Him.

40-56. 'All waiting for Him.' Joyful words! It is a blessed thing to wait for Jesus. 'None ever wait in vain who wait for Him.' Probably they were disappointed at His crossing the lake, and lingered on the beach, hoping for His return,

which would give them the opportunity of watching the stilling of the tempest.

41-56. See Matt. ix. 18-26.

41. This is one of the most touching of the Scripture histories. Notice the power of parental love. It made this ruler leave his dying child ; he sent no messengers—the need was all too urgent for that—he came himself, direct to Jesus. The yearning that made him tear himself from her in her last moments was divinely guided. His love and anguish made him humble. This ruler, to whom men bowed, ‘fell down at Jesus’ feet, and besought Him.’ Find Old Testament examples of what parental love will do. None of you can fully *realise* your parents’ love ; and even when you have tried your utmost to do so, there will be unsounded depths of tenderness of which you know nothing. It is a most precious thought that even *their* love is only a faint shadow of ‘Our Father’s.’

43. Physicians are to us just what God makes them.

45. The crowd, driven and pressed against Him, gained nothing—the contact being unsought.

47, 48. This was a painful effort to her ; perhaps she feared that He would be displeased with her for seeming to steal, rather than to ask, the blessing. If so, how all-consoling His reply !

49. How the father’s heart must have throbbed when he saw the messenger, his tidings in his face ! How hard the trial of his faith ! Sometimes minutes in our lives seem like long hours of anguish, and do the work of years.

52. ‘She is not dead, but sleepeth.’ Can language be more beautiful ? One by one we lay our precious ones, or they lay us, to rest in this sweet, deep, peaceful sleep, that will know no waking till the world’s great Easter morn.

55. ‘Her spirit returned.’ How plainly this teaches us its existence apart from the body, and its reunion with it at the resurrection ! Whither had it gone during that brief absence ?

56. Picture the ruler’s house as Christ found it and as He left it.

CHAPTER IX.

1-6. See Matt. x. 1-15.

3. One staff was allowed (Mark vi. 8).

5. 'Shake off,' etc.; *i.e.* shake off all intercourse and responsibility.

7-9. See Matt. xiv. 1-12.

7. 'Perplexed.' Well he might be! The wicked have a thousand perplexities of which God's children know nothing. Herod, a Sadducee, denied the resurrection, which makes his uneasiness the more remarkable.

9. 'John I beheaded.' How coolly he speaks of his crime! No remorse; no touch of human feeling. 'He sought to see Him.' How easily he might have done it! It was one of those lazy wishes that lead nowhere; he never saw Christ till the night before His crucifixion. If you seek Christ, do not trifle with Him—be in earnest about it.

10-17. See Matt. xiv. 13-21.

10. 'Told Him,' etc. What a privilege, whether they told of failure or success, of difficulties or of triumphs!

11. 'Healed them that had need of healing.' Are *we* bringing our hurts to Him? Are we even conscious of them?

13. 'Give ye them to eat.' A hard command, since food was just what they lacked; but 'His biddings are enablings.'

18-27. See Matt. xvi. 13-28.

22. His mother was probably the only one who believed that He would be raised up the third day. She does not seem to have visited the sepulchre that wondrous morning, perhaps knowing that He was no longer there.

23. 'Take up his cross *daily*.' This tells us that no day on earth will be wholly without a cross; there is comfort in the thought that we *take it up* daily, since it implies that we lay it down at night—as in God's good, kind Providence most of us do—forgetting care and trouble in the sweet, tranquil coming-on of sleep. There will come a night when, perhaps quite unconsciously, we shall lay it down for ever, and awake to

'Another morn than ours.'

Till then, let us take it up willingly, make it a *voluntary* act of loving surrender of our will to God's: that will bring peace.

25. The world tempts the young with its pleasures, the middle-aged with its honours and successes, the old with its riches. A grasping, miserly old man or woman is one of earth's saddest sights.

28-36. See Matt. xvii. 1-13.

28. 'On the eighth day,' or after an interval of six days. Most of the small discrepancies of Scripture are easily reconciled, if we find the missing link. In the Old Testament we read that David fled to Achish, whereas Abimelech reigned then. Yes, but Abimelech was the name of the kings, as we speak of the Pharaohs or the Cæsars.

29. 'The fashion,' etc. Nor is Christ the only one whose countenance real *heart-prayer* can change. Doubtless, angel eyes often see us kneel down with perplexed, sad faces, and rise up at peace, the perplexity unravelled, the sorrow cast on One Who is infinitely able and willing to bear every burden that we cast on Him. If we have each our guardian angel, how sorrowfully their loving, watchful eyes must look upon us when we yield to pride and sin; and when we repent and struggle back to Christ's feet, kneeling there contrite and ashamed, they doubtless say with tender joy, 'She has come back again—she *prays*.' None of us read the physical changes of health and sickness on the features of those we know and love best, as they read their *spiritual* expression.

33. 'As they departed.' Bright manifestations in this world are always departing ones; they will be abiding in heaven.

35. How cheering this intercourse and this 'voice' must have been to Christ! To Himself, His coming death was one of shame and anguish; but these visitants from heaven doubtless spoke of it as the very crown of His glory, for which all heaven waited in adoration.

37-45. See Matt. xvii. 14-21.

37. 'The next day.' The whole night seems to have been spent on the mountain.

38. 'Mine only child.' His one flower crushed and blighted.

44, 45. Notwithstanding the bright vision of His glory as the Son of God, the truth that He impresses upon them is what the Son of *man* should suffer at the hands of *men*. All this was so contrary to their ideas and wishes, that they were afraid of any fuller insight into it. It would have been wiser to ask, wiser to know, the worst, especially since in this case, as in many others, the 'worst' proved the 'best.' The story of the cross, of which the Apostles dreaded even to hear, became their stay, their glory, their salvation.

46-48. See Matt. xviii. 1-5.

46. There is something strange in the *time* when this happened. One would imagine that the sight of Christ's glory would have been so humbling to them that their own pre-eminence would have been the last thought in their minds.

49, 50. The link between verses 48 and 49, is 'In My Name.' John, young and ardent, answers, by telling Christ what they had recently done. Were they wrong? They were. Christ does not say that the man ought not to have followed them; but that acting in His Name, he was for, and not against Him. See the noble conduct of Moses (Num. xi. 24-29). Love our own dear Church as deeply as you will, but believe that God own and blesses other Churches also.

51. 'Received up,' as though His death, resurrection, and ascension were one grand whole. The time was come; yes, and for each one of us the time will come, when we shall pass away for ever from the scenes that know us now. Time's footfall is silent, soundless. We never hear him passing—we seldom realise it; for one stage of life glides into the next quite imperceptibly. No one can say *when* the babe grows out of the sweet charm of infancy into childhood, or the child becomes the youth; so, too, with the onward stages to the last of all. Probably, scarcely one dying Christian in a thousand says to himself, 'This is my true birthday; *this day* I shall be with

Christ.' Observe the expression, 'He stedfastly set His face to go,' etc. See Isa. l. 7. 'Set my face like a flint.'

52. He had before shunned publicity ; but now, all being matured, He seeks it.

53. The Jews usually took the Samaritan route, without meeting such inhospitality. Perhaps they would have received Jesus as a private person, but not as Messiah.

54, 55. James and John, not the fiery Peter. John had just before been rebuked for his exclusiveness. We find a hallowed form of the same zeal in his second Epistle, verse 10, and his third Epistle, verse 10.

56. 'They went to another village.' *That was their punishment ; no fire came from heaven, but Jesus passed them by.* O ! Saviour, pass us not by ; in life, in death, abide with us !

57-60. Matt. viii. 19-22.

60. Christ did not mean to cast a slight on filial piety, of which He was Himself the only perfect Example. Explain the real meaning of the three incidents in Matt. xii. 48, Luke ii. 41-50, and John ii. 4.

61, 62. To us it may seem as if Christ spoke less tenderly than He was wont ; but He knew *all* the circumstances, we know none of them. He saw the man's heart, and may have read there that to let him go home was to lose him for ever. It was doubtless a crisis in his history, and there comes such a crisis in many lives, in the moment of making an irrevocable decision. 'I wish to leave in a month,' a servant said to me. 'Why ?' I inquired. 'Because I cannot stand the Bible-class.' The poor girl had her wish, took another situation immediately, and within a week caught diphtheria, of which she died. I felt sure that some arrow of conviction had reached her, through God's blessing on the Bible-class, or she would not have disliked it so much. When the sad tidings came, how yearningly I hoped that, on that painful, lonely deathbed, amidst strangers, she might have been Divinely led to the sinner's only Friend ; *but*, on this side Eternity, I shall never know.

CHAPTER X.

1. SEE Numbers xi. 24, 25. The mission of the seventy whom Christ now sent was temporary, that of the twelve, permanent.

2. Matt. ix. 37, 38.

3-12. Matt. x. 7-16.

3. 'Lambs' in their gentleness, their *need* of the Shepherd's care. Their enemies were 'wolves' to raven and destroy; the arch-enemy is compared to 'a roaring lion.'

8. See 1 Cor. x. 27.

12-15. Matt. xi. 20-24.

13. Chorazin is supposed to have been situated on the west shore of the lake; these cities were so totally destroyed by the Romans that their sites cannot be ascertained.

17. The seventy soon returned; especially rejoicing that through Christ's name even the devils were subject to them, this power not having been specified in their commission. God often exceeds His promises.

18. 'I beheld,' etc., leading their thoughts onward to His own grand final victory over Satan.

19. See Mark xvi. 17, 18. 'Nothing shall in any wise hurt you'; how strongly worded! Many things may grieve or trouble us, only sin can hurt. The waves that break against the vessel do not hurt it, they bear it onwards to 'the haven where it would be.'

20. He gives them a higher joy than power over evil spirits, 'your names are written in heaven.' Is *my* name there? (See Phil. iv. 3, Rev. iii. 5, and xiii. 8). How may we know whether our names are written there? If Christ's name be written on your heart, *your* name was first written in His book of life.

21, 22. See Matt. xi. 25-27. 'Rejoiced' might here be rendered 'exulted.'

23, 24. See Matt. xiii. 16, 17.

24. How dark life's problems seemed to thoughtful heathen philosophers! what a waste of sorrow life itself!

25. 'Tempted,' i.e. tested ; the question seems to have been asked in no hostile spirit. What fallacy is involved here in the use of the word 'do' ?

26. An apposite question to a doctor of the law, and one that tested *him*.

28. If indeed he did this, he would be what the world has never seen, *save once*, a perfectly righteous man.

29. 'Willing to justify himself'; how true to human nature, from Adam downwards !

30. The road from Jerusalem to Jericho lay through a deep and fertile hollow, the Tempe of Judæa ; it was then, what it is still, a den of robbers.

31, 32. Jericho, the second city of Judæa, was a city of the priests and Levites, thousands of whom dwelt there. These two men were probably returning from the Temple services, but they had not learnt 'I will have mercy and not sacrifice.' The priest 'saw,' the Levite more cruelly raised the sufferer's hopes by coming to look. How bitterly the disappointed man must have felt his unkindness when he too went his way. Deut. xxii. 4 forbids such conduct even to a beast. 'By chance' here simply means 'it came to pass.' The Christian knows no chances ; life is too full of the direct consequences of our own actions, and of God's overruling providences, to leave any room for chance.

33. The Jews expressly excluded Samaritans and Gentiles from being neighbours, which makes this conduct the nobler ; 'compassion,' his best, is mentioned first. God values any help given to His children in their need, but the sympathy that prompted it is still dearer to Him.

34. Wine to cleanse the wound, oil to allay pain.

35. 'Two pence,' two days' wages, sufficient for several days' support. 'When I come again,' etc. Mention some of Christ's words that convey the same promise to *us*.

36, 37. Though compelled to answer, he will not reply 'the Samaritan'; but 'he that showed mercy on him.' Notice the practical application, 'Go and do thou likewise.' We may

each do it, not perhaps to wounded bodies, but to hurt minds.

38. 'A certain village,' Bethany; Martha, evidently the elder sister, 'received Him into *her* house.' We receive Him into our houses whenever we receive Him into our hearts.

39. As Mary sat at the Lord's feet she 'heard,' that is, kept listening to, His word. Explain the difference between hearing and listening, the latter a voluntary act, the former involuntary.

40. 'Cumbered,' expressive old word. Ah! we are all cumbered with sin and sorrow, temptation and care; let us cast them all on our burden-bearer, the Lord Jesus. Probably she came in from another room where Mary had left her; 'bid her therefore,' she does not presume to call Mary away; most likely, had she done so, Mary would not have obeyed.

41. 'Martha, Martha'! emphatic repetition; 'anxious and troubled about many things,' *i.e.* many preparations, 'much serving.' We must never let anxiety and care come between us and our Saviour.

42. 'One thing is needful.' Perhaps some of you are secretly thinking, 'I want a great many things.' Yes, but 'want' and 'need' are different. Explain in what way. In a certain lower sense, many things are necessary for us, and it is of earthly provision that Christ says (Matt. vi. 32), 'your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need,' etc. One thing only is *supremely* needful; what is that? 'chosen the good part'; so Moses 'chose rather to be evil entreated with the people of God,' etc. Both sisters were disciples, one a working, the other a contemplative Christian. Jesus loved both. See John xi. 5.

CHAPTER XI.

1. This reference to the Baptist seems to show that the speaker did not hear the sermon on the Mount. Certainly, John never taught men to say 'Our Father,' though the Old Testament Scriptures teach the Fatherhood of God. (Jer. xxxi. 9).

2-4. See Matt. vi. 9-13.

5-8. Showing the power and efficacy of prayer. Midnight was a most unusual hour for a call, though the evening was a common time for travelling.

7. 'I cannot rise,' without a distasteful exertion ; we often mistake want of will for want of power.

8. His friend's need does not prevail, but he yields to strong importunity which will take no denial, 'as many as he needeth'; when once he had risen he was kind and liberal. The lesson of the parable is this, if even the selfish and self-indulgent can be won over by importunate pleading, how much more will prayer avail with Him Who is 'rich unto all that call upon Him,' more ready to hear than we to pray.

9-13. See Matt. vii. 11.

10. 'Everyone that asketh receiveth.' Yet remember that there are delayed as well as prompt answers to prayer.

14-36. See Matt. xii. 22-45.

24-26. This parable is the exact reverse of the preceding one ; what causes the difference ? the absence or the presence of Christ. Is He enthroned in *my* heart ? What a picture of the evil spirit 'seeking rest' ; the gloomy restlessness of lost souls must be a terrible part of their punishment ; lost, yet eternal, therefore for ever lost !

27, 28. How natural this ! See Elisabeth's salutation (Luke i. 41-45). Christ does not reprove the woman, though pointing out the higher blessedness of those who hear the Word of God and keep it.

32. Probably Jonah's preaching produced such effect because he prophesied immediate temporal destruction. Which of you would not be awed by hearing that in forty days you would die a violent death ?

33-36. See Matt. v. 14-16.

37-38. See Mark vii. 2-4, which explains why He marvelled.

39-41. Notice the familiar images that Christ uses. 'As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he.' How needful for each of us is the prayer, 'Create in *me* a clean heart' !

42. 'Mint and rue,' etc. Christ places the smallest pro-

ducts of the earth in contrast with the solemn duties neglected. Of these He says, 'Ye ought to have done them'; of the tithe paid for small herbs, He bids them, 'Not leave it undone.' We must never set the fulfilment of one duty against the non-fulfilment of another; least of all, a ceremonial observance against a great moral law.

43. Matt. xxiii. 7-10.

44. A Jew was defiled by walking even unconsciously over a grave.

45, 46. Referring chiefly to the heartless rigour with which the legal rites were exacted.

47, 48. Building sepulchres, to show how differently *they* would have treated the prophets; yet killing the Prince of Life Himself, of Whom the prophets taught so many things.

49-51. Matt. xxiii. 34-36.

49. 'The wisdom of God.' Compare this with Matt. xxiii. 34. 'I send.'

50, 51. The last *recorded* murder of a prophet was that of Zacharias, whose dying words were, 'The Lord require it.' How different were Stephen's words! One of these holy men died appealing to God's justice on his murderers; the other entreating His pardon for them. This is a striking illustration of the change wrought by the example of Him Who is *Love*.

52-54. In Matt. xxiii. 13 the Scribes and Pharisees are charged with shutting the kingdom of heaven; here Christ reproves them for taking away the key of knowledge. How awful will be the hinderer's doom!

CHAPTER XII.

1. Notice the eagerness of the people. What is hypocrisy? A man will own himself to be almost anything rather than a hypocrite.

2, 3. Give instances of this from Scripture.

4. 'My friends.' In the killing of the body, they and He would alike suffer; not a few to whom He spoke would die

for *being* His friends. One grain of incense offered to an idol would have saved countless Gentile lives ; and one word against the Crucified would have appeased the most relentless Jewish persecutor ; but these holy men and women loved Him more than life. 'No more that they can do.' *No* ; death is a protector as well as an enemy ; nor would the Christian count him an enemy at all, did not Scripture call him so (1 Cor. xv. 26).

5. Fear of hell is a Divinely authorised motive ; and, of all who have ever trodden this earth, Christ alone knew what hell is, and what the anguish of lost souls means. Notice the repeated 'Fear Him.'

6-9. See Matt. x. 29-33.

6. Matt. x. 29 tells us that five sparrows were sold for two farthings—'not one of them is forgotten.' If He remembers *them*, surely He is mindful of *us*. Not a tear, not a sigh, escapes Him.

10. See Matt. xii. 31, 32.

11, 12. See Matt. x. 17-20.

13. Now Christ's solemn teaching is interrupted by one full of his own affairs (deeming them as important as anything of which Christ was speaking), who demands His interference. We, too, are prone to over-rate our own concerns, and our own consequence. Everything in the present looks large.

14. 'Man.' Not thus did He address His 'friends.' Moses was a Divinely appointed judge ; but Christ disclaims any such office.

15. Why this solemn warning ? Because covetousness, the *love* of money, is 'a root of all kinds of evil.' In what does 'a man's life' consist ?

16-21. How was this man a fool ? Verse 16 gives no clue to it ; it was not wrong to be rich, and not his own doing that the sun and rain made his fields fruitful. Verse 17 gives no clue to it. It was prudent and right that the precious fruit of the earth should not remain rotting on the ground, but be safely housed. Nor was it sinful to plan, in verse 18, pulling

down and enlarging his barns ; but he adds, 'There will I bestow all,' etc. What, *all* ! none for the widow and the fatherless—none for His service Who gave the abundant store ? Notice the twice-repeated 'My.' We are always in some danger when we use that little word too freely : *my* money ; *my* health ; *my* talents ; *my* industry. Who gave them to us ? See John iii. 27. Even that noblest of our powers—the *working* faculty — comes to us from God ; He made it. Verse 19 shows the poor rich man a fool indeed. 'Much goods laid up for many years.' Yes, the goods were there ; but the *years*, where were they ? What a future he plans—to take his ease, 'eat, drink, be merry' ! He holds out this prospect not to his body, but to his soul—poor, poor soul, that could be satisfied with food, and wine, and mirth ! He was a fool because his all was laid up here, and because he counted on years that he should never see.

20. 'This night.' Awful summons ! Would it be such to us ? To some of us it may come as suddenly. 'He heapeth up riches, and knoweth not who shall gather them.'

21. How can we be 'rich toward God' ?

22-31. See Matt. vi. 25-34.

24. 'The ravens' were probably selected by Christ, as being unclean ; which strengthens the argument that God will care for us, who are far more unclean in His sight.

28. 'To-day' we are here, working out line by line, moment by moment, our eternal destiny ; 'to-morrow' we shall be reaping what we have sown in time.

29. 'Doubtful' ; *i.e.* unsettled, off the balance.

30. Earthly parents may know a child's need, and be utterly unable to help ; but not so our Father.

32. 'Little flock.' Tender words ! 'Good pleasure' : it is indeed to His good pleasure that we shall owe it if we enter His kingdom. These words are spoken not of Christ, Whose love we know so well, so intimately, but of the Father, 'Whom no man hath seen, nor can see.' If He will give us the kingdom, why not bread ?

33, 34. A more vivid expression of Matt. vi. 19-21.

35. 'Girded about': as for immediate action; that nothing may impede (2 Kings iv. 29). 'Lamps burning': oil in the vessels.

36. If our Master were to come to-night, or to send for one of us by the swift, sure, silent hand of death, should we be found *ready*, and prepared to meet Him? Is our work neglected and disordered? or can we lay it down and open to Him with joy, 'straightway'? Remember that there will be no time then to take up ravelled threads of duty; our life-web passes out of our keeping as we weave it—no faulty work can ever be undone.

37, 38. How inspiring a promise! To sit at His Feet in Paradise, and eat of the crumbs from His table, would seem joy enough; but not so will He receive us. Oh to be

'Pouring out our rapture sweet
At His own most sacred Feet.'

When we have confessed our sins to our Saviour, and He has said to us, 'Enough; they are pardoned—blotted out for ever,' most likely He will wipe away our tears in that most blissful moment, and we shall realise that we are *there*. But *shall* we be there? Are we indeed Christ's *now*? Ponder this solemn question ere you sleep to-night. Notice the double blessing. He comes for some earlier, for others later; and, looking out on the sins and sorrows of earth, we may think them happiest whom He calls in youth; but there are doubtless special joys for those who have served Him longest and most faithfully.

39, 40. The suddenness of His coming is compared to that of a thief in the night; no warning, no foreboding, yet He comes!

41, 42. To us, the twelve, or to the multitude around? First and especially the twelve; but He also speaks to all His servants. 'Faithful and wise.' Fidelity is the first requisite; a servant who is not true to his master is of no value to him, no matter what his other qualifications may be. Wisdom, too,

is indispensable—a right judgment in every part of his work. We may make or mar what God gives us to do.

43, 44. The faithful servant shall be promoted to higher trust hereafter, and to bliss that no heart can conceive ! Oh ! precious recompense for life's brief toil and woe ! If God only promised us as many years in Paradise as we have given Him on earth, it would infinitely overpay us, even though at their expiration we might have to take life's burdens up again. Thank God it is far otherwise ! Laid down once, they are laid down for ever.

45, 46. Listen to the unfaithful servant. 'My Lord is not coming for years ; I will do as I like, and make others do my bidding. Plenty of time before me !' O fool, to say so ! How awful will be the knock at the door to him !

47, 48. High and low degrees of knowledge, high and low degrees of guilt. God help us to profit by what we know, or what will be our doom !

49. Fire has a threefold office : to warm, to purify, and to consume. 'What will I,' etc. ; *i.e.* 'What should I have to desire, if it were already kindled ?'

50. 'A baptism' ; *i.e.* of the cross. 'How am I straitened ?' What pressure is on me 'till it be accomplished' ! Before the crowd He would not utter His inner feeling ; but what a revelation these words are to us who have seen Him in Gethsemane, and on Calvary ! He alone could say, '*All* Thy waves and Thy billows are gone over Me.'

51-53. See Matt. x. 34-36.

54-57. See Matt. xvi. 2-4. Christ here addresses the multitude.

56. 'This time'—the most memorable that earth ever saw. Countless loving hearts, turning back to it through eighteen centuries, have sighed, 'Oh that *I* had been there, that *I* had seen my Saviour !' 'Blessed are they that have *not* seen, and *yet* have believed.'

57. Christ here appeals to their inner conscience, that might have recognised Him if it *would*. Even in earthly things a

defect of sight and hearing often lies in the *will*. Men do not care to listen, do not choose to see.

58, 59. See Matt. v. 25, 26. 'Give diligence.' Ah! how short our working-time is! How soon, and often how suddenly, with no warning twilight, the night cometh!

59. We who have *nothing*, pay 'the very last mite'! Even if it were possible from this moment to incur no fresh debt, would that cancel the past? Thank God for Him Whose precious blood blots out sin! Some of you may have read of the deaf and dumb boy to whom Charlotte Elizabeth taught this great truth. On his deathbed he told her, in the finger alphabet, that at the judgment-day God would open the great book, and turn to the page with Jack's name at the top, and would see 'no bads—no, no, nothing—none.' Alarmed, she asked, 'Has Jack done no bads?' 'Oh yes! Jack done many bads,' he said, with a sorrowful look; and then explained, partly on his fingers and partly by signs, that Christ had let one drop of His blood trickle all over the page, and God saw only that.

CHAPTER XIII.

1. THESE Galilæans were probably followers of Judas of Galilee, who, twenty years before, had forbidden the Jews to pay tribute-money (Acts v. 37). Perhaps his power was at its height at the time when this chapter opens, and Pilate treacherously slew a party of them when sacrificing at one of the festivals. His sin against Christ was not his first crime; one sin paves the way for another—makes the next easier. Doubtless this murder of the Galilæans, offenders though they were, helped to make him deaf to the voice of conscience on the momentous occasion awaiting him. We tremble for the future consequences of sin, for its certain punishment hereafter; but we do not realise that an awful part of that penalty begins at once in its effect, then and there, on a man's whole nature. Doubtless this crime of Pilate's was the topic of the day, and they told Christ of it, as of something that had just occurred.

2. They were not to think this a judgment for any special sin. We are not to reason from the outside of things, and to say, for instance, if a mother loses her babe, 'Ah ! perhaps she idolised it !' 'Who art thou that judgest ?'

3. See the direct personal application. Things do us no good unless they come *home*. How much of God's truth has really come home to *you* ? It is nothing to believe that all men are sinners, unless we say, 'I will arise and go,' etc.


4, 5. Nothing is known of the fall of this tower. One of our holiest Indian missionaries, the Rev. H. Whitley, was killed by the falling of a wall around his own compound ; and another equally devoted, the Rev. R. Noble, died of a broken heart, on account of the drowning of thirty little girls in the Mission School at Masulipatam, from the cyclone, in November, 1864. He struggled on at his post till October, 1865, but never rallied from the shock. Doubtless the heathen deemed it in each case 'a judgment' on the missionaries. I well remember the brief telegram to the Church Missionary House : 'Noble is dead.' Yes, but his works do follow him.

6. The Church resembles a vineyard in being fenced round, cultured, cared for. The fig-tree is a barren professor, one who has had every opportunity and profited by none. The Master seeks fruit and finds none.

7. 'Three years' from the time that fruit should have appeared, was a long and sufficient trial for a fig-tree. 'Cut it down' ; well may He use these indignant words ! See Matt. iii. 10. What is it to 'cumber' ? Am *I* a cumberer ?

9. Here speaks our Intercessor. What trouble He is willing to take ! He will dig to the very roots of it, probe the heart with some keen sorrow—leave no means untried.

10. No more intercession *then*. All this passed in the presence of the fig-tree ; it stood a silent auditor of its doom. Not so with *us*, whose last year of grace may be far spent ere we know that it has begun.

10-14. How terrible her condition—'bowed together' for teen years ! Such was the outward frame ; and what of the

springs of life within? Imagine the pain, the dragging, the weariness that at times must have been torture! In such a position what could she do? how occupy herself? But *Jesus saw her*, called her to Him, spoke to her, touched her, and she was whole! Well might she 'glorify God.' In that synagogue there was one in high place who was not glad but indignant; not, as he pretended, at the violation of the Sabbath, but at the glorification of Christ; the woman, it is said, 'glorified God,' and Christ was God.

15. Hypocrisy was the one sin which Christ reproved with sternness; even to the woman taken in adultery (John viii. 3-11) He spoke gentle tender words. On the cross He prayed for His very murderers, pleading that they knew not what they did; but hypocrites met His just abhorrence. How intimately He knew her history, though she had probably never seen Him before! She did not come forward and tell Him of her eighteen years of woe, but her very presence in the synagogue was to the pitiful Saviour in itself a prayer. How easily might she have made her infirmity a pretext for shrinking from all eyes, in which case she would have carried it to her grave. Observe that He had known her sore burden all the time, but the hour of help had only now come.

17. What a bright ending to this pathetic story! And many a story as sad and touching will have a yet brighter ending; but not now, not *here*. How one delights in the confusion of His enemies, and the rejoicing of all that believed!

18-21. See Matt. xiii. 31-33.

22. Still journeying on to the scene of His passion; no turning aside.

23. Had He answered 'few,' how sore a discouragement to many a struggling soul, 'faint yet pursuing'! Had He answered 'many,' multitudes treading the broad road would have cherished more strongly than ever the strange blind confidence of safety at last; to be safe in death we must be safe in life. Hence the deep wisdom of His silence.

24. Yet whilst taking no notice of the questioner, see the

solemn lesson that He draws. No mere wishes, no faint prayers nor fitful efforts do anything; it must be a life and death struggle. In itself it would seem an easy thing just to come to Jesus, and stretch out the hand of faith to Him; but the battle is with the world and Satan without, and the *traitor-heart* within. See Matt. vii. 13, 14.

25-28. See Matt. vii. 21-23. He will Himself shut the door—a final shutting out of the impenitent. Ah! that bitter weeping for which there is no sympathy, no comfort. 'See Abraham'—catch a glimpse of the bright plains of Paradise, of the blest faces of parents, children, friends; and then the blackness of darkness for ever. Dives saw Lazarus, recognised Abraham whom he had never seen; how clear a proof of recognition in that home of love! Strange it is that any can doubt it.

29. Yes, from all the four winds God will gather them in, and they shall sit down—no passing guests that tarry but a night; no wayfarers welcomed for a season, and bidden to pass on, but children who have left school for ever, and are come to dwell *at Home*: no more going out for *them*. Now, this very day, Christ is knocking at the door of our hearts; but *then*, if we have refused to admit Him, *we* shall knock, and none will open.

31-35. Christ was now in Herod's dominions, on His way from Peræa, east of the Jordan. Herod, haunted by guilty fears, wished to get rid of Him (see Mark vi. 14), and sent the Pharisees to persuade Him with friendly words to go.

32, 33. How easily He saw through it, and through Herod's duplicity! He names the merciful works that He must do on His journey, adding, 'I must go on my way,' etc., for 'it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem,' that slaughter-house of God's servants. Notice what awful severity of satire.

34, 35. See Matt. xxiii. 37-39. Were these tender words spoken twice—once on the journey, and once some days later in the Temple? or does St. Luke record them here, though uttered elsewhere?

CHAPTER XIV.

1, 2. PROBABLY the man was not a guest, but one who came hoping to be cured.

3-6. See Matt. xii. 11, 12.

3. He does not seem to have solicited it, except by his presence, and doubtless by his longing looks ; that was enough ; looking to Jesus *is* prayer. Some of you may be called to know trouble so sudden, so overwhelming, as to take away the power of uttering any words at all ; then kneel down, fasten your heart and eyes on Him, and you will feel Him close to you. Jesus answered this sufferer's unspoken prayer ; and He also answered the unuttered murmurs of those around, by asking a simple yet unanswerable question.

4. They wisely 'held their peace' ; and 'He took him, and healed him, and let him go.' Blessed Saviour, take *me* ; heal *me* ; let *me* go free from the disease of sin.

7. This teaches a deeper lesson than courtesy, though this is included in it, and is an important duty. Mention texts inculcating it, and Scripture examples of it. The middle of the couch was the most honourable place ; Josephus mentions the disputes about seats at feasts.

8. Notice the delicate courtesy with which Christ avoids any personality, by mentioning a different kind of entertainment from that going on at the moment. Did He always avoid personality ? Why not ?

9. 'The lowest,' not merely a 'lower' room or place. There is no necessary disgrace in being lowest, some one must be lower than the rest. The shame lies in being sent down after ostentatiously claiming a high place.

10. 'Friend, go up higher' : what a reward for his humility ! Doubtless something like this is often said by ministering angels around a believer's dying bed. Only one word is altered : it is not 'go,' but 'come.' 'Come up higher,' above earth's turmoils, into the land of peace. Contrast the feelings of the two guests, one going to a higher, the other to the

lowest place ; each had just what he deserved. Compare Prov. xxv. 6, 7.

11. A general rule drawn from the above.

12. Christ does not forbid hospitality to kinsmen and rich neighbours ; but these acts are repaid in kind—those who invite, are themselves guests in turn. When the guests are the needy, who cannot recompense the kindness, then He accepts it as done for Himself.

13, 14. Invite those who do not expect to be asked—God's sorrowful afflicted ones. Give them not only one happy day, but a week or two of pleasant anticipation. Make it a life-maxim to give everyone *all* the happiness you can. Show your poor guests the gratifying *respect* evinced by bringing out for their enjoyment some of your choice things. Do it for the sake of Christ, Who cares for them ; and then you may say in your heart, 'I have invited my Master to-day, and He will come.' I could not describe the happiness that I have felt in such preparations for *such* a Guest ; the deep joy it brings is 'recompense' enough—if, indeed, one needed any.

15. Shall *I* sit down at that glorious feast ? Remember, as a man *lives*, he *dies* ; *to-day* may decide our eternity.

16. 'Bade many' : especially the Jews.

17. They little knew how many prophecies were at that moment fulfilling. Apply these loving words to yourselves. God, your Father, says to each of you, 'Come' ; His heart is ready to receive you ; His Holy Spirit waits to teach, and guide, and bless you. Will you not come ? Are *you* not ready ?

18-20. On various grounds all decline, implying at the same time that, *but* for such reasons, they would have come ; probably all intend to come some other time. The various excuses that lull conscience in a fatal sleep belong to the three heads elsewhere given—'cares, riches, pleasures.' Things in themselves innocent may harm us. The answer in verse 20 is the least respectful—the most abrupt.

21. 'Angry.' Well he might be ! We all feel keenly the rejection of our love or kindness. 'Bring in the poor,' etc. ; *i.e.* the publicans and sinners.

22. 'Yet there is room.' Yes ; this very moment there is room in the Father's house, and the Father's heart, for *you*. This blessed truth cannot be pressed upon you too often, or too strongly ; it is the hardest thing in the world to convince men that God *loves* them.

23. The world's highways. The Gentiles—we ourselves—are included.

24. Not one guest who refused should ever have the second invitation, on which he perhaps counted. None of you are certain that you will ever again be urged to come to Christ ; this *may* be to any one of us our last day of grace. How many lost souls are now saying, 'Too late' !

25. 'Great multitudes' : probably going to the Passover.

26. See Matt. x. 34-37.

27. See Luke ix. 23. Notice the words, 'Come after Me.' We are not to bear our cross in some erratic fashion of our own, as some do, pretending that it is not heavy, or that they even glory in it ; we must take it just for what it is, and bear it *after Jesus*.

28-30. Common sense teaches us this. Some lives are just a series of beginnings ; what will they answer when asked, 'What have you done with your life ? what have you made of it' ? You, who are young, and by God's blessing can be moulded to almost anything that you earnestly and perseveringly seek to become, conquer this evil habit before it conquers *you*, or it will spoil your life on earth, and may frustrate your hope in heaven.

31, 32. Another illustration of the same lesson.

33. This does not mean that we are required to give up God's good gifts ; but we must renounce dependence upon them—hold them as loans that He may take back at any moment. We must not let our happiness depend on anything, or anyone, but God ; He can make us happy by giving what we yearn for, or by taking it away, or even by withholding it altogether.

34, 35. See Matt. v. 13.

CHAPTER XV.

1. THEY seem to have been attracted by the wonderful adaptation of Christ's teaching to their own need. He preached pardon, their guilty hearts craved it; He preached peace, their troubled spirits yearned for it. They came to Him hungering and thirsting for just what He longed to give. He gives little to those who have little conscious need.

2. 'This man receiveth sinners.' Thank God for these blessed words, though spoken with ineffable scorn and derision! The Pharisees intended something like this: 'Look at that group around Him! You may know Him by the company He keeps. *We* would have kept even our garments from their touch.' What matter their proud thoughts and scornful gestures? Enough for us to know that *we* are sinners, and that this man receiveth such. Has God taught you these great truths? Perhaps some of you would say, 'I know I am a sinner—I feel it, and grieve over it; but I am not sure that Christ will receive *me*.' 'Art thou the excepted one?' Take courage; only *try* Him. If you do perish at the foot of the cross, you will be the very first who ever has.

3-7. Matt. xviii. 12-14. These three parables represent the sinner—first, in his stupidity; secondly, in his unconsciousness of his lost condition; thirdly, as knowingly and willingly estranged from God (Bengelius).

4. No parable holds at all points. Mention the points in which this one fails to do so. What would become of us if He *left* us, while seeking one who had gone farther astray? Learn, from the *trouble* He takes, how He *loves* the wanderer. 'The wilderness' of this world. Travellers in a wilderness are easily lost, and find it hard to retrace their steps. In these, and other respects, earth is truly a 'wilderness.'

5. 'Layeth it,' etc. Perhaps effectually to prevent its being lost again; perhaps because the weary frightened sheep, torn by the brambles of the rough path it had unwisely chosen, or hurt by savage beasts, could not reach the fold without such

aid. What a picture of ourselves! weary, affrighted, hurt, yet not destroyed; for the unseen Shepherd was following all the while. Perhaps He laid it on His shoulder, not from fear of its straying, not from its inability to walk, but simply because He *loved* it. With the same love He follows *us*, stopping us sometimes on the very brink of a precipice, leading, guiding still.

6, 7. As if He must communicate and share the joy that fills His heart. By these persons may be meant those who have grown up from childhood in His fear and love. They, too, need repentance daily and hourly; but in a different sense and degree. There is always 'joy in heaven'—ever-growing joy. Here, if we pour into a full cup it runs over and is lost; there, the capacity for gladness *grows*—as the raiment of the Israelitish children in the wilderness perhaps did.

8. 'Sweep the house.' Bengelius says this is 'not done without dust on man's part.' The first visit of the Holy Spirit to a sinner's heart is no peaceful one; it stirs up a hard conflict.

9, 10. The owner of the coin calls in her neighbours to rejoice with her when it is found; so the great Owner of the ransomed soul calls His angels to share His joy. 'Joy in their presence.' Yes, it is *His* joy, of which they catch the reflection, sharing it *with Him*. I think we can afford to suffer with Him during this transitory life, if such things as these are in store for us hereafter. It is as if He said, 'You scorn Me for seeking out these publicans and sinners, but all heaven is full of eager interest in their recovery, though it is "nothing to *you*, all ye that pass by."'

11. Here begins Christ's most touching parable.

12. Notice the utter selfishness of this thoughtless younger son, weary of home restraints, only eager for his own way. What was to hinder his elder brother saying, 'Give me also my portion'? Very likely, as it was, he often said to himself in the days that were to come, 'All this is really mine—my father is living upon *me*.' And then Satan would whisper worse

thoughts still, to a son so well prepared to receive them. This must have been the case, from his manner when, after many days, the prodigal returned. Observe that the father granted his request, as parents often do, in foreboding sorrow, when an undutiful son *will* take his own way; or a vain, foolish daughter threatens to break her heart if she may not marry some worthless man, who, in the dark days to come, will break it for her in sad earnest. I know several such cases at this moment. A very wilful, disobedient child goes out into life with a mark upon his brow—not legible, like Cain's, but really *there*—perhaps wept over by holy angels.

13. The request granted, what follows? Note, too, what often follows when God, *our* Father, grants what *we* have asked perversely, or with an urgent self-will that could brook no Fatherly 'Nay.' He 'gathered all together.' Nothing left for the generous father who had given all; nothing reserved for his own future needs. He 'took his journey into a far country.' So we wilfully go far from God, and holiness, and peace.

Let us follow him: at every step more hardened, more estranged. Perhaps at the moment of departure even *he* felt some twinge of conscience, some faint yearning towards the pleasant home and the kind father. Imagine the father's feelings as his son passed out of sight! Why did he let him go? Why does *our* Father sometimes grant unhallowed requests? Sometimes in anger, as in Balaam's case; sometimes in hidden love, knowing that only sorrow can teach some undisciplined heart, like poor Rachel's, a lesson that must be learnt. Wilfully, and of set purpose, the prodigal journeyed till he reached some place far enough away from home and father, and there, with wicked companions, 'wasted his substance in riotous living.' So long as it lasted, conscience slumbered.

14. 'Spent all'; nothing left, neither money, nor friends, nor character. Many had rioted with him, not one offered him a crust now. Not one of those who had courted him as their host, now offered him even a place of indoor service.

'A mighty famine,' held back by God till the time when he should feel it most, like the storm that overtook Jonah when far out at sea. It did not come while the ship was near the port of Joppa, and could easily put back. So it is with the sinner; everything goes against him; everything goes wrong with him, as with one mentioned in the book of Judges, of whom it is figuratively said, 'The stars in their courses fought against' him. Who was he? And now the prodigal 'began to be in want.' His bitter experience had many a humbling stage. Who can say how many summer friends repulsed or jeered him? Such an one as he would have tried begging before working, especially in the fields. Have *you* known what it is to be 'in want' of something above and out of yourselves? Have you felt that hidden want that is in every heart till it finds God?

15. Not yet humbled enough to go home, he is thankful at last for toil of the lowest possible kind, and in a Jew's sight vile. Perhaps he envied even the swine; *they* had all they wanted; no fears for the future troubled *them*. 'Oh that I were that dog!' exclaimed the brilliant, admired Colonel Gardiner, many years ago, when just beginning to feel the weight of his sins, and before he 'arose and came to his Father,' and became a devoted servant of God.

16. 'Husks,' the hulls of the carob-tree; and no man gave him even those. Perhaps he took them, or they *may* have been part of his wretched wages. In this latter case, the pathetic words, 'No man gave,' etc., must mean, 'No man gave him any better food; no man cared whether he ate or starved.' The friendship of the world is at once a hollow and a very costly thing. The waves were closing over his head, and no man regarded; he was sinking unmissed.

17. 'He came to himself': before, he had been 'beside himself'; but now he remembered his home, the comforts that even the servants enjoyed there. They had 'bread enough and to spare,' and he, the son, was perishing with hunger; *i.e.* was on the verge of it. Did he never know till now what

sort of a home he had left? In one sense he knew it well, or the warm, living memory of it could have had no place in his mind; but whilst he dwelt there the *restraints*, not the blessings, of home had filled his thoughts.

18. The remembrance of the servants recalls the father himself—*his* father still, amidst all his sin and degradation. The thought stirs within him, 'I will arise,' etc. Blessed resolution! Pride might have said, 'What! go in those rags?' 'Yes, just as I am.' Hopelessness might have said, 'You will never get there; you will die upon the road.' 'I can but try; if I perish, I perish.' Whose words were those? 'He certainly will not receive you if you *do* reach him.' 'I am going to my father. Wretch as I am, I have a father still.' 'Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight.' 'Against heaven'; that is the gravest part of it, and in our case also. So David says (Psa. li. 4). He had sinned deeply against his people, whose example he should have been; against Bathsheba and her noble husband; yet the enormity of his sin against God impressed him so terribly that he says, 'Against Thee, Thee only have I sinned.' The prodigal sorrowfully owns his sin against both the earthly and the heavenly Father. Well he might!

19. 'No more worthy to be called thy son'; yet a son *still*. 'Make me as one of thy hired servants.' The once discontented son implores a servant's place; and he would have taken it, too—the man was in earnest. The elder brother's taunts, and the cold looks of friends, and guests, and servants, might have been hard to bear; but he would have remembered the swine and the husks, and what it was to 'perish with hunger,' and would have been content. Just such a change is conversion. All things become new. How many of *you* have passed from death into life? Will not some of *you* this night arise and go to your Father?

20. 'He arose and came,' etc. Doubtless he walked with feeble tottering steps, his rags fluttering in the breeze, the very birds taking him for a scarecrow. What mattered that?

he was going to his father, going home at last. 'When he was yet afar off, his father,' who must have been looking out for him, 'saw him,' recognising him under all his misery. What depths there are in a parent's heart! it is a love deeper than any other, and therefore a type of the perfect love of God. The father had 'compassion': others had seen the poor wayfarer with wonder, or even scorn or derision; not so the father. He 'ran'; the son's failing limbs had no power to run. What a moment when he beheld his father! his white hair streaming, his arms outstretched, his face quivering with eager joy, as he 'fell on his neck and kissed him.' Such was his reception, and thus will God for Christ's sake receive *us*, 'not weighing our merits, but pardoning our offences' with the same royal bounty. This father had a kingly heart. Do you remember anyone else in Scripture who is said to have acted like a king?

21. This confession was uttered after the kiss of welcome. See Ezek. xvi. 63. Why did he not say all that he purposed saying? Because the father would hear no more; his heart *yearned over him ere he uttered a word*. This interrupted confession recalls a sweet thought of my mother's on her death-bed. 'When you know that I am really gone, your first thought may be that I am in ecstasy. Perhaps I shall be confessing my sins to my Saviour, till He shall say, "Enough; no more of this; thou art now perfectly sinless for ever."'

22. And now the father calls for 'the best robe' (Zech. iii. 4, 5), 'a ring' (Gen. xli. 42; James ii. 2), 'shoes'—yes, like a slave, he had come barefoot.

23, 24. 'This my son': owned joyfully though in rags; the father was in nowise ashamed of him, only thankful to know that the son was ashamed of *himself*. He receives him at once to the full blessings of sonship; he does not point to a cottage on the estate, and say, 'Stay there till you have proved yourself worthy to be taken back.' No, he takes him to his heart and home at once; 'they began to be merry,' *i.e.* to rejoice. 'Merry' is one of the many words that has deteriorated; it

now often means noisy mirth, as empty as 'the crackling of thorns under a pot.'

25-27. Now comes the discord in the sweet strain; the elder son was in the field, and knew nothing till he heard music and dancing, and the servant whom he summoned told him what had happened. 'Thy brother is come'; perhaps he had almost forgotten that he had a brother. Joseph's brethren had, at their first coming into Egypt, well-nigh forgotten him, till their sin came home to them. Still, as Keble says:

'No distance breaks the tie of blood—
Brothers are brothers evermore.'*

Therefore, the tidings 'thy brother is come,' should have moved him to other feelings than anger.

28, 29. We must, however, remember that from his selfish point of view, the return of the wayward, troublesome, younger son was in some respects trying. He had had his share, and wasted it disgracefully; and now he was come back, perhaps to have a second share, at all events to live on what would come to the elder brother. The very sting of the annoyance may have been the delight of the old father. Notice the gentle word 'entreated'; the same parental love moved him towards both sons. The tender words call forth first boasting, then reproach.

30. 'When this thy son came,' not this my brother; he does not own him at all; the shame was the father's only. 'Now when this wretch comes, instead of taking him in decently at the backdoor, and giving him a crust, you kill for him the fatted calf.' This was what he meant; and if the father had been in his grave when the prodigal returned, and the elder son reigning in his place, this is doubtless exactly what he would have done. Thank God that our Father lives to welcome us, and that our Elder Brother is indeed a brother 'born for adversity.' Not always does a wanderer find a living parent's welcome; not always does a prodigal return.

31. How gentle his pleading!

* Second Sunday after Trinity.

32. 'It was meet,' *i.e.* right and fitting, to rejoice over a wrecked life restored ; 'this *thy* brother'—he reminds him that the returned wanderer belonged to *him* too. This parable is the most exquisite series of pictures ; we see man's sinfulness, the way of repentance, the matchless love of God ; but in one point the reality far transcends the parable. After the prodigal had carried off his share, the whole estate belonged prospectively to his brother ; therefore he is a loser by whatever the younger son subsequently receives. Not so with our inheritance above, which, though shared by millions of millions, will grow in unexhausted store to all eternity.

CHAPTER XVI.

1. DID the informant do right or wrong ? Clearly right ; had he kept silence he would have been a 'partaker of other men's sins.' People have very hazy views on such points ; some come talebearing on the slightest provocation to *themselves*, though they would see a grave wrong done to another with the selfish remark, 'It is no business of mine to interfere.' Define clearly what should be the rule in such cases. If some one has done you a small injury, perhaps inadvertently, say nothing, except a gentle word to the culprit in private. If the wrong is done to another, or if harm is likely to spread, it is your duty, unless the offender at once desists, to tell the person whose business it is to keep things right. This especially applies to deceit of any kind ; if you conceal *that*, you share it.

2. What a thunderclap to the dishonest steward ! Mention similar ones. He thought his sin was covered, and was prospering, and in a moment it found him out. Some day these solemn words will be spoken to each of *us*. What shall we answer ? What is our stewardship ?

3, 4. He had one sole object, *viz.* to secure another home when found out, as he knew he would be. He felt that he could not face the inevitable day of account ; nor can we, but for Him, 'Who His own self bare our sins.'

5. 'How much owest thou unto my lord?' What a proof of his carelessness that he had to ask! His own books should have told him exactly how much each owed. Apply this question to yourselves individually. How much owest *thou?* and *thou?* and *thou?* He has given you life, and all that makes life sweet—talents, and opportunities of cultivating them; above all, He has given you a Saviour, to Whom you may each say:

'Forget not what *my* ransom cost.'

6, 7. From one debtor he deducts a fifth; from another, on whom he chiefly relied, he deducts half.

8. His master commended, not his injustice and dishonesty, but his prudent foresight in seeking to provide himself a future home. Are *we* seeking one? We shall all soon need it. Luther says, 'Why should I toil myself in gathering sticks to my nest, when to-morrow I shall be gone out of it?' 'Wiser in their generation.' In the dark, owls see better than eagles; but the eagle is the nobler bird. 'Sons of the light': how beautiful and descriptive a name!

9. 'Make friends,' etc.; *i.e.* turn to your own advantage. See Daniel iv. 27; Luke xii. 33, and xiv. 13, 14. It is the 'love of money,' not money itself, that is the 'root of all kinds of evil.' We must not think, on the other hand, that even the best and holiest use of money can serve as the key to the kingdom of light; nor need we seek that key, for 'Christ hath opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers.' What grand old words! There is a wide difference between being saved by our works, which no child of Adam ever was, and being judged according to them. The former is man's plan of salvation; the latter, God's.

10. This verse is truly 'a jewel of gold.' Fidelity is prized by every one; it does not depend on the amount entrusted, but on the way in which we fulfil our trust. Unfaithful in a trifle, mistrusted in everything. Those who have the training of the young must be faithful to their trust in life's *little*

things, or their whole work is marred. A mirror with the smallest fracture in it is a cracked mirror to the end.

11. 'The unrighteous mammon.' How disparagingly Christ speaks of what men idolise! What are 'the true riches'? Are *you* seeking them?

12. Here, we are stewards of all we enjoy; there, it will be our own. Here God lends us health, comfort, talents, opportunities, loving ones to cling to and to cherish, uncounted blessings; but they are only lent, any one of them may be taken from us in a moment. It will be different *there*—they will be ours in everlasting possession; for He Who now lends will then *give* us that which is *our own*.

13. 'No servant can serve two masters'; *i.e.* be at the command of both; for the two services are in direct opposition. One enjoins what the other forbids. Explain and illustrate the meaning of this.

14. Covetousness, their master-sin, was too plainly struck at.

15, 16. 'Justify yourselves': make a fair show (1 Sam. xvi. 7). Mention some of the different names by which God and the world call the same thing. 'Prudence,' *e.g.*, is the world's name for covetousness; 'A proper spirit,' for pride. Few things do more harm than this; we are so easily led to think that things *are* what men call them.

17, 18. See Matt. v. 18-32.

19. Here we have one of our few glimpses of the invisible world. Perhaps we may infer from this parable that the impassable gulf can yet at times be pierced by sight. What must that be to the lost? 'I, too, might have been *there*.' We seldom long for what has always been totally out of our reach; but an *offered* and *rejected* blessing often causes life-long remorse. Mention other lessons that this parable teaches. Where else do we read of 'purple and fine linen'? (Esther viii. 15; Rev. xviii. 12.)

20, 21. How sharp are life's contrasts! Dives could not have revelled on his sumptuous fare, had not health as well as riches been his portion. Lazarus had nothing upon earth;

disease and utter want were his sad lot. Yet stay! even *he* had two alleviations of his misery; for Pollok truly says that no human being ever laid his head

‘Upon a pillow stuck so full with thorns
It might not hold another prickle still.’

What earthly alleviations had Lazarus? No one cared enough for him to dress and bind up his wounds, but he must have had some one to carry him to the rich man's gate; he had, too, the tender brute pity of the dogs. Probably he went there habitually, and was actually fed upon the rich man's crumbs and fragments; since Dives evidently knew him well.

22. One verse tells the end of both. Mention other verses in Scripture that speak of more than one death (Exod. i. 6, etc.). The poor man's burial is not alluded to—far different was that of Dives. Mention other funerals in Scripture. Which, in the Old Testament, is by far the most honoured—the most remarkable? ‘Carried by the angels,’ etc. What a glorious journey! How beautiful are those lines of Bonar's—

‘Then what a glad ascending shall be ours,
Then what a pathway up yon starry blue!’

Will ours be a glad journey? It will certainly, to some of us, be very sudden and unexpected: and now is the time to ask, and to answer, that solemn question, ‘*Where am I going?*’ Some of you may ask, ‘If God so loved Lazarus as to send His angels to bring him to such a good place in Paradise, why did He overlook or forget him on earth?’ *Was* he forgotten or overlooked? Not for one moment; nor was he left in that sorrow an hour after it had done its work. Infinite Love and Pity watched his every sigh and moan. Still, that does not excuse the selfish neglect of Dives, who should have been to Lazarus what the good Samaritan was to the wounded traveller. Lazarus, God's suffering child, relieved, and comforted, and personally tended by Dives, might have been the channel of salvation to that poor rich man's house.

23. ‘In Hades’: not the final place of torment; but oh!

how dreadful an abode! 'Seeth Abraham.' Afar off, indeed, yet visible—yet recognised, though he had died so many centuries before. The dear faces, over which we wept when last we looked upon them, may have borne traces of pain, or sickness, or sorrow. Necessarily it is usually so; though now and then a coffin-lid closes on some sweet *young* face, so exquisite in its lovely expression of unutterable peace and holy calm, that it seems a reflection of the everlasting peace of heaven. Be assured that the radiant faces that will beam upon us there will be the *same* that we loved so well, only transformed and beautified as with the touch of Christ's own Hand. We know not yet what His love, in its lavish bounty, will do for us in that good time which is to come.

24. 'Father Abraham.' Alas! natural descent would not help him; nor does it avail the children of pious parents now. 'Have mercy on *me*,' who showed so little. How small an alleviation is all he dares to ask, nor could even that be granted.

25. 'Son.' He does not deny the relationship. Dives had had *in his lifetime* all the good things that were ever to come to him; whilst Lazarus had received his 'evil things,' all the sorrow that he was ever to know; but do not think for a moment that his earthly sorrows opened for him the gate of heaven—*nothing* can do that but the all-atoning blood of Christ. The way in which sanctified affliction is a blessing, is this: it chastens our undisciplined hearts; it makes earth less dear to us, and we learn to love Him and the better country more.

26. 'A great gulf fixed.' What awful words! At this moment there is *no* gulf between you and heaven's brightest hopes. Seek your Saviour whilst you *may*. Fifty years hence, some of you may still be living, grey-haired and swiftly passing towards man's long home—the grave. But for all the rest of us our place in Eternity will be irrevocably fixed—we are helping to fix it this very moment while I speak.

27, 28. Different motives have been assigned for this request; one, that he asked from selfishness, lest their reproaches for his bad example should aggravate his woe;

another, that he wished to throw blame on God for not having sufficiently warned himself. Who first presumed to cast blame on God, and in what words? As regards Dives, we should not assign bad motives without proof; nor, indeed, have we anything to do with other people's motives—let us see to our own, which will give us trouble enough. You may doubtless believe that, though for ever lost, the last spark of natural affection and human pity still lingered in his breast. Probably, a wicked soul in its last hours in life and its first hours after death, is very much the same, only plunged in fathomless depths of woe. Doubtless, in the companionship of ruined souls, it becomes ever more and more corrupt; just as the glorious society of holy angels, and the ineffable communion with Christ Himself, will make the blessed spirits holier and happier through all Eternity. More free from sin they cannot be; but it must always be possible to grow in holiness and love, in likeness to Him on Whose blessed face they gaze, being transformed more and more 'into the same image from glory to glory.'

29. Abraham says they are sufficiently warned; 'they have Moses and the prophets.' Mention some of the Old Testament passages to which he may have referred. How can *we*, who have the full teaching of the New Testament as well, have any hope of escape if we neglect to profit by it?

30. Yet he contradicts Abraham! Remember this, if you refuse salvation to-day, there will be even less hesitancy in your refusal to-morrow, be the circumstances what they may.

31. When, not long afterwards, a real Lazarus rose from the dead, and was seen by crowds, Christ's enemies hated Him the more; nor did the more wondrous fact of His own resurrection soften their perverse hearts. You all believe in 'His precious death and burial, His glorious resurrection and ascension,' but is He indeed your own Saviour? Are you His?

CHAPTER XVII.

1, 2. WHY is it impossible ? Because this is a sin-stained world. Multitudes seem to be only thinking how much harm they can do without being found out ; and far greater multitudes do harm for want of any thought at all.

3, 4. See Matt. xviii. 15-17, 21, 22. In verse 4 the forgiveness seems to have done little good to the offender ; but he who forgave had surely a sevenfold blessing.

5. Moved, perhaps, by the difficulty of avoiding and forgiving offences, the Apostles asked for the only spiritual blessing that they ever seem to have requested for themselves. We can only account for this by remembering that He Whose special office it is to convince of sin, had not yet come. Whilst they had the Bridegroom with them they had no conscious want ; they walked at His side rejoicing, by sight rather than by faith.

6. See Matt. xvii. 20.

7-10. How useful was this servant ! He ploughed, he prepared meals, he waited on his master at table ; yet even he merited no thanks. So the Apostles, when they had done and endured and forgiven much, were still to regard themselves as unprofitable servants. How does St. Paul, after his matchless labours and sufferings, describe himself ?

11. 'The midst' ; *i.e.* between, or on the borders.

12. Lev. xiii. 45, 46, explains *why* they stood afar off. In what is sin like leprosy ? It spreads, it defiles, it makes men dangerous to others, and in the end it destroys. In what is it unlike leprosy ? It can for a season be hidden ; leprosy could not : it takes years to make sin so legible on men's faces that all may read it, whereas leprosy may come in a moment, and stamp the poor sufferer for all time. Mention any on whom it came thus suddenly. Then again, all shrank from the leper ; but too many do not shrink at all from walking in the counsel of the ungodly, or standing in the way of sinners, nor even from that most fatal state of all, sitting in the seat of the

scornful.' What verse of which Psalm gives these three gradations? Show how they *are* gradations.

13. Trench says, 'Their common misery drew these poor outcasts together; nay, made them forget the national antipathy between Jews and Samaritans.' Where are we told of four lepers sitting at the gate of Samaria? (2 Kings vii. 3.)

14. The lepers might have argued the point; they might have said that only cleansed lepers were to show themselves to the priest. Jesus bade them go just as they were—to teach us that blessed comforting truth that *we* too must go with our burden of sin, just as we are, to Him. 'As they went, they were cleansed'; each man felt himself a new creature, and saw the same wondrous change in the rest.

15, 16. Yet only *one* returned to give thanks! Did Christ meet with such ingratitude, and shall *we* repine at it?

17. 'Were not the ten cleansed?' Christ knew this as well as if He had seen the cure. 'Where are the nine?' Where ought they to have been?

18. He almost seems to wonder as well as grieve that 'save this stranger' ALL had proved thankless. We are often best rewarded by those from whom we expect least.

19. 'Arise': he had thrown himself on his face at Christ's feet. 'Whole' in a far deeper sense. How infinitely he gained by coming *twice* to Jesus—cure for the soul as well as the body!

20, 21. They expected the immediate coming of His kingdom in great pomp and glory: Christ shows them their mistake. Eighteen centuries have rolled back into eternity, and still earth waits the glad Advent of her King. *Will* it be a glad Advent to *you*? Only if you 'love His appearing,' if His invisible kingdom is within your hearts *now*. You can judge of this for yourselves. No anxious Christian mother can say, 'On such a day my daughter *began to live*.' What we do *see* is this: the child who once grieved us by levity, or pride, or self-will, or ingratitude, grows loving, tender, thoughtful, glad to be told of faults; the Bible is read more earnestly (and

only earnest reading does good), the whole character softens and mellows, and the mother pours out her gratitude to Him Who has wrought the change. Examine yourselves by some of these tests, and you will then see whether God's kingdom, at least in its beginnings, is within *you*. Religion does not grow downwards from the life into the heart; it grows as plants do, just the other way: it takes root in the heart and springs upwards, adorning and beautifying the outer life. Mere natural sweetness of character is sure to fail when life's discipline applies its crucial tests to our weak points. What are crucial tests? Illustrate this from Scripture. Unless religion is within you, you have neither part nor lot in it.

22. 'Desire to see,' etc. When things go wrong with us, and the one person who could set them right is gone, we think, 'Oh! if he could come back even for a day!' You will feel this when your most disinterested counsellors, your parents, are taken from you.

23. 'Lo there, lo here!' This may refer to unwise expositors of prophecy, who see in each war or revolution an immediate premonition of His coming.

24. It will resemble the lightning in its brightness, its swiftness, its suddenness, its unquestioned manifestation. No need to telegraph the tidings; the whole world will know in one moment the glorious majesty of His appearing.

25. 'First must He suffer.' This is true in its measure of all lives; the suffering comes before the joy; the cross here, the crown there. Nor is the crown for all cross-bearers, only for those who take it up and follow Christ. 'Be rejected': alas! the rejection of Christ is a sin of our times too. Those pathetic words are true still, 'He is despised and rejected of men.' It is not bowing at His name, nor any external service that is the real test; but *cleaving* to Him, holding Him dearest in our hearts.

26, 27. It is useful to notice in these days when Old Testament history is often denied, or explained away to nothing, that Christ Himself refers to these narratives as *facts*, not

as myths and fables. The antediluvians were awfully wicked, but here only their worldliness, their unpreparedness, are mentioned. The immense ages to which they attained must have increased the general wickedness very much. Now, the worst of men can seldom do harm after fourscore years ; but what must it have been when they counted life by eight or nine centuries, each viler than the last ! It is as if one utterly hardened sinner had gone on spreading corruption from William the Conqueror's days till now, and were spreading it still. What moral ruin would track the footsteps of even *one* such man ! In utter scorn and derision the sinners in Noah's time doubtless watched the building of the ark, the vast stores provided, and the countless animals that entered it ; but the waters prevailed, the ark floated calmly off, and they were *left behind to die*.

28, 29. Again, it is not the wickedness of Sodom that is dwelt upon, but its unpreparedness, its swift, sudden, hopeless doom. This is a still more striking similitude, for the antediluvians had one hundred and twenty years' notice ; whilst all the intimation that the Sodomites had could only date from the evening before their destruction. Then, no doubt, they heard rumours of wondrous guests tarrying with Lot, of sudden blindness falling upon those who insulted them, and of Lot's warnings to his sons-in-law.

30. Should He come to-night would you be glad, or afraid, or utterly overwhelmed ? Some of you may say, 'I should be glad, and *yet* afraid.' This is no unnatural feeling, and were an Archangel to come, awe would certainly fill all our minds. Happily it will be no Archangel, but our own Saviour Who died for us ; and the first sight of Him, if we are His indeed, will flood our hearts with that *perfect* love which casteth out fear.

31. A warning against reluctance to part with present treasures, to save which some have perished in a burning house.

32. One of the shortest verses in Scripture. Mention others.

How scanty is our knowledge of Lot's wife, yet how clearly she stands out on the canvas of a long-vanished past! She died a death that none ever died before, a death that was at the same moment a transformation. Her history teaches us the sin of hankering after the world, and the danger of looking back when we have begun to run well; she *only looked*. Had she 'looked behind her' with a pleading cry for permission to try to save her married daughters and their little ones, she would doubtless have escaped her doom. It was worldliness that destroyed her, as it does millions; dress, vanity, pleasure, the love of riches, destroy far more than the car of Juggernaut. Incidentally we may learn that if it was so easy for God to turn her into salt, of which she was *not* made, how easily can He, in the resurrection, fashion the sleeping dust into the forms it was wont to wear.

33. In the days of persecution this was often the martyr's experience.

34-36. What a severance will one day be made amongst those now dwelling together! The men were severed whilst at rest; the women, at the hard toil that devolves on Eastern women. Our sex owes everything to Christianity.

37. There are few more horrible sights than the birds of prey hovering over a battle-field; except it be the roofless Towers of Silence, where in some countries the dead are laid, and before the funeral convoy passes out of sight there is a rush of wings, the ever-watching vultures swoop down, and in a few minutes only a skeleton remains. Remember the terrible night-vigils of Rizpah, the daughter of Aiah; seldom was there such intensity of love. What did she do, and how did it end? 'Eagles,' etc.; the Roman eagles clustering round the guilty city where Christ's sacred Feet so often trod. If I had been there, should I have been one of the faithful few? Should I have owned Him, when despised and crucified, as 'my Lord and my God'? Ask yourselves these questions.

CHAPTER XVIII.

1. 'ALWAYS to pray.' This does not, of course, mean that we are to be always praying; we must work as well as pray, and work 'with both hands earnestly,' too, if we mean to do any good in the world; but there is such a thing as worship in work, and a blessed thing it is. Before you take up any duty, commend it and yourself to God; do not lose sight of His presence with you, examining your work, and try to please Him by doing it well and thoroughly. Whatever you do in this spirit, and in humble dependence on Him, *is* worship. We must *hold on* to prayer; it is as needful as the breath of life—it *is* the breath of the soul's life. No discouragement must ever make you think it does no good; give up prayer, and you are undone. Eternity alone will show what our apparently unanswered prayers did for us and those we loved; and, meanwhile, answers to prayer mark every step of the Christian's life-journey to its close. Prayer is the utterance of the heart, asking God for what we need, and believing that if it be good for us, He will bestow it. I know you will never give up the habit of prayer; but *do you pray?* 'Behold! he prayeth!' was said of a strict Pharisee, whose prayers had always abounded. Who was he? and what caused this to be said of him?

2. A most unfit person for his post. 'He that ruleth men must be just, ruling in the fear of the Lord.' If he neither feared God nor regarded man, for whom did he care? Self.

3. Helpless, friendless, a foe oppressing her, her only appeal to an unjust, heartless judge, she had apparently a very slender chance of success; but slender as it was, she caught at it, clung to it, and persevered till her cause was won. What we call 'a poor chance,' is often prospered by God. Can you give any instance of this? He helps by much or by little; nay, by failure as easily as by success. Everything is to us just what His blessing makes it. Faith and experience teach

blessed lessons to those that '*observe these things*' (Psa. cvii., last verse).

4, 5. The truthfulness and accuracy of this man's portraiture of himself are most remarkable. Each man has three characters: one known to those about him; another known to himself, but not to them; a third known only to God. Besides the correctness of the judge's estimate of himself, we cannot but marvel at his audacity in daring to utter such thoughts even '*within himself*.' Notice how consistently he studies self. For his own ease, he refuses to listen to the suppliant—it was too much trouble; then, when her continual coming entailed much greater trouble, he avenges her, lest she should wear him out—not lest her heart should break in the struggle; *that* was nothing to him—self was lord of all. Is self *your* lord paramount? How may you know? What an example her '*continual coming*' sets us! Yet *she* came to an unjust judge, who cared nothing for her. *We* come to One Who bids us ask what we will.

6. This is Christ's interpretation of the parable. How wonderfully He draws lessons from everything!

7. '*His elect*'; the objects of His tenderest love and care, '*the apple of His eye*' (Zech. ii. 8). '*Cry day and night*.' *This* is prayer—prayer that wings its way to the very throne of God, and is heard amidst the Hallelujahs.

8. '*Speedily*'; when the right moment comes there will be no delay. We cannot hasten the time; most likely impatience delays it, or mars the blessing. Abraham would have escaped one great trial and many lesser ones, had he waited for a son till Sarah bore him Isaac. Hagar and Ishmael, and their strifes with Sarah and her son, must have chafed him many a time before he nerved himself to the decisive step he finally took. What was it? '*Shall He find faith*,' etc.; a solemn question.

9. Is this fault peculiar to the Pharisees? What text on self-trust comes down like a sledge-hammer? '*He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool*.'

10. Perhaps the Pharisee thought he went up to pray ; but he prayed for nothing, did not ask anything whatever ; he went up to boast, to tell God, not of his sins, but of his goodness.

11. Had he humbly thanked God for keeping him from flagrant sin, he would have been quite right. Bradford, one of 'the noble army of martyrs,' seeing a criminal led to execution, said in his humility, 'There goes John Bradford, but for the grace of God.' None of us know how much the restraining grace of the Holy Spirit does for us. 'Or even as this publican.' Fancy the scorn with which he said it ! and yet at that very moment there was joy in heaven over another wanderer coming home, another soul saved.

12. Having enumerated his moral perfections, he now vaunts his religious ones, which complete the measure of his self-satisfaction ; his cup of conscious merit really runs over. Lev. xvi. 29 only prescribes one annual fast ; and even during the captivity only four were observed ; but this man fasts twice in a week. He gives tithes, not merely of what the law laid under tithing, but of all his gains. Men say sometimes, 'I cannot give up my one darling sin, but in everything else I will do more than is required.' Oh ! it is just that one sin that *must* be given up, before God will accept anything at all that we could offer Him ; till then, all that you either do or surrender is worthless. Never let us bargain with conscience ; it is God's voice. A man stricken with the plague would not feel safe, on the ground of his exemption from a hundred other diseases. No ; for *one* can kill. So can one bosom sin destroy the soul.

13. Both publican and Pharisee stood—it was the Jew's attitude of prayer ; but the publican stood with bowed head, ashamed to look up. He stood 'afar off,' feeling unworthy to approach his God ; but that was the true way in which to draw near (Psa. xxxiv. 18). Smiting his breast in the depths of his repentance, he said, 'God be merciful to me a sinner.' Here, in seven words, we find acknowledgment of God, penitence, confession, prayer. Humility is the root of all true religion,

it is life's great lesson, and He is continually teaching it to His children, by the discipline through which they are trained ; sometimes through tears, and pain, and sorrow, by touching them in their tenderest point, or by the withholding of what would have been to them life's crown of bliss. Remember, better far is it to be crowned in heaven, where *the humble shall be exalted for ever*. One of the holiest women I ever knew, said on her death-bed to her husband, 'I could wish that the last words I ever hear from you may be, "Lord, forgive her all her sins !"' What sweet music to the dying are those exquisite lines :

'Sin no more, weary pilgrim, sin no more ;
No more at all for ever, sin no more.'*

14. 'Justified rather than the other' ; *i.e.* and 'not the other.' The Pharisee neither sought nor found nor desired justification ; he justified himself, and that sufficed for him. The publican sought help beyond himself, and God gave him his heart's desire.

15-17. Three Evangelists describe this touching incident ; Matthew and Mark call them 'little children.' Luke calls them 'babes.' See Matt. xix. 13-15 ; Mark x. 13-16. Perhaps some of these little ones, whom Jesus blessed, lived to be His martyrs ; if so, how doubly honoured in life's dawn and eventide ! You, too, were brought to Him in infancy ; are you His indeed ? Oh that through all 'changes and chances of this mortal life,' you may 'continue His for ever, and daily increase in His Holy Spirit more and more, until you come to His everlasting kingdom' !

18-30. See Matt. xix. 16-30, and Mark x. 17-31. 'What shall I *do* ?' This question involves at once a deep truth and a dangerous fallacy. We must indeed 'work out our salvation with fear and trembling' ; but we must look to Jesus only for it, as implicitly as though our part were just to lie still and let Him save us. But we must not expect even a temporal blessing to be thrust into a closed hand. You are in

* E. H. Bickersteth.

a fatal error in the opposite extreme if you say, 'I have done all I can, and therefore He will save me.' Say rather, 'He *has* saved me; and therefore all that I am, and all that I can possibly do, are consecrated to Him for ever.' Do not for one moment think that you have to win over an unwilling Saviour. If you are His, He has won *you*; and you are pledged to Him for evermore. As in earthly matters, so in religion, begin at the right end—love Him Who *first* loved *you*.

22. In God's scales this man's love of money outweighed his love for his own soul. Have *we* any idol? Let us each look well to it, for idols *weigh heavy*.

30. Of course not literally; but even here the sacrifice will be made up, for God will be no man's debtor. His own sweet peace is a rich exchange for earth's transient losses; and remember what He has in store for His children—even 'eternal life.' No archangel could fully tell us what those two words mean; nor should we comprehend him if he did. Had our ancestors been told a hundred years ago that we could travel a mile in a minute—that trains of carriages would run at the bottom of the Thames—that we should send electric messages beneath the Atlantic, or round the world, they would have shut up the speaker as a lunatic. Yet these marvels are the triumphs of mere human power; what then will God's infinite resources do for us in our palace-home? God grant that some day we may *know*! Religion repays us by taking away the dread of death. An aged Christian, a few minutes before he died, after a few holy loving words to his friends and servants, said, 'I shall want nothing more on earth; draw the curtains round the bed, that I may be alone with God.' They did so; and presently heard him say in a calm cheerful voice, 'Now for the mysterious change.' After that, not hearing him breathe, they withdrew a curtain, and found him in the quiet repose of death.

31-34. See Matt. xx. 17-19.

31. 'All things that are written,' etc. Mention some of the most striking Messianic prophecies in their chronological order.

34. The repetitions in this verse clearly show how utterly the meaning of Christ's plain words was hidden from them ; which adds much weight to their subsequent testimony. None could 'ever call them credulous disciples ; had they believed Him, what anguish of disappointed hope they would have been spared !

35-43. See Matt. xx. 29-34.

35. Though Matthew is the only Evangelist who mentions two blind men, there were two, Bartimæus, the son of Timæus, being the speaker.

38. Evidently 'Jesus' was a name familiar to him ; since, he said, 'Jesus, thou Son of David,' etc.

CHAPTER XIX.

1, 2. As Jesus passed through Jericho, Zacchæus mingled with the crowd. His is a Jewish name ; he farmed a large district with other tax-gatherers under him, who helped to increase his ill-gotten wealth. How little he thought, when he left home that morning, that he would bring Jesus back with him ! Still less, that his whole life-history would change from that day. So far as our own consciousness goes, we generally turn life's sharp corners suddenly ; but nothing is sudden with God. 'The wheels of Providence move slowly, but they grind exceeding small' ; *i.e.* the minutest points, the very falling of a sparrow, are all studied. Mention some who turned sharp corners in life suddenly. How unconscious was Rebekah, when she went that eventful evening to the well, that her whole future destiny turned upon the moment of her arrival, and one small act of courtesy to a stranger ! Yet God had been preparing for that change in her life by a long train of events in two distant homes ; and at the right moment the lines of two lives met. What a privilege to know that if we are God's children, the same loving Providence is over *us* and every detail of our lives !

3-5. Urged by curiosity, Zacchæus persevered under difficulties, and conquered, as the persevering generally, by God's

help, do. The sycamore here means the Egyptian fig, with leaves like the mulberry. Whom did Jesus see '*under*' a fig-tree? How astonished Zacchæus, safely hidden among the leaves, must have felt when Christ paused beneath the tree, and called him by name, inviting Himself in royal style to his house, probably to remain the night!

6. How expressive is every word! The crowd made room for him willingly *then*. 'Joyfully.' Yes; the loving look, the gracious words, had won his heart for ever.

7. 'Murmured': half envious of the honour, wholly disdainful of the recipient. He, Who could so instantaneously secure a place in that hard man's home and heart, never *need* have been without a shelter. But He would gauge, and probe, and sound all kinds of privation and suffering, that He might be the more emphatically the Friend of the poor and the sorrowful.

8. How promptly he lays aside every weight! Hitherto, money had been his object; now he voluntarily offers henceforth to give half his goods to the poor. Why was this sacrifice accepted from him when it would not have been accepted from the young ruler? In the case of Zacchæus, it was his own spontaneous offer; in the other instance, it was Christ's special test. Doubtless, too, He, Who alone knows what *would* happen *if* such or such things were permitted, saw that the young ruler would idolise the remaining half more than ever. On the other hand, Zacchæus doubtless used his wealth to God's glory: we have good evidence of his intention to do this. The Roman law exacted a fourfold return for wrong of this kind; Jewish law required the principal and a fifth more (Num. v. 7). It is rest for one's very soul to know that He, Who foresees the issue of every possible contingency, will give His children 'that which is good.'

9. Zacchæus had spoken openly, and before all present; Christ answers as openly, 'Salvation is come to this house.' A new atmosphere was to pervade his home; for its head, a son of Abraham by birth before, was now and henceforth a partaker of his faith.

10. See Luke xv. 32 ; such 'lost' ones as Zacchæus. The more unpromising they were, the more trouble Jesus took for them. If people are unattractive and do not interest you, you think yourselves justified in saying, 'I do not care for them,' or 'I do not wish to cultivate them, they are too common-place.' Ah ! your Saviour does not think so ; your guardian angel, if you have one, does not say it of *you*. Every careless speech like that narrows your heart, till by degrees it becomes too contracted to hold more than one. Who will that one be ?

11-27. See Matt. xxv. 14-30.

12. 'A far country,' to check the belief that His kingdom would be at once set up.

13. 'Trade ye herewith till I come' ; *i.e.* use, and so multiply your talents. The servants were left to themselves in their Master's absence ; no record was keeping an account of their proceedings ; they were to be judged by the results ; and no help whatever was given by the Master whilst away. In all these respects our case is wholly different. We are never left alone, Christ is ever ready to hear us when we seek His help ; and a secret record is being kept of our minutest actions, of our words and of our motives. Life, as we live it, is being mysteriously photographed by unseen angel hands ; remember there will be a *final* picture in the series. How will *that* represent us ? As a man lives, so will he die.

14. 'His citizens hated him.' In its direct application this refers to the Jews, who, much as they detested the Romans, said, 'We have no king but Cæsar,' preferring even the infamous Tiberius to Christ. There are too many still who hate religion and religious people ; and many more who simply live as if they had no soul, no Saviour, no record-keeping God. Psa. L. 22 tells their awful doom.

15. There is an end to all things ; the long-delayed day of reckoning came : 'gained by trading.' You know what trading means ; a merchant spends a large sum in goods, bought wholesale in considerable quantities ; and sells them at such a profit as to leave a balance in hand after all working expenses are

paid. With this balance he keeps up his home, and with skill and integrity provides for his children's future ; for his wealth *grows*. In the same way *used* talent, well-cultivated, grows exceedingly ; you cannot prize too highly the opportunity that you enjoy of educating, *i.e.* drawing out your talents. God gave them ; we can receive *nothing* except from Him (John iii. 27).

16, 17. This man is the type of God's best and noblest servants, who leave their mark behind them for generations, when they go to their reward and to their Saviour's 'Well done' ; joyfully welcomed *there*, sorely missed *here*.

18. This man had worked, but not so diligently, *not* 'with both hands earnestly' ; he is a type of an average Christian, who does some real good in his day, but whose place soon fills up ; another does the work just as well. Which would *you* rather be ? Better far to have five years of the higher nobler life than twenty of the lower, even though both may have their reward, as in the parable ; but only the first had Christ's most precious commendation.

19. So, when the average Christian dies, Christ welcomes him, and the angels are glad to have him ; but they sing another song when some specially faithful servant joins their goodly company, and the Master greets him with a brighter, more approving smile. The difference between verse 17 and verse 19 makes this evident. Remember we cannot efface life-failures and shortcomings : even in heaven we cannot alter, or undo, or remedy anything. To all eternity your mortal life will remain just what you make it now. Some people say of their faults, 'Ah well ! I shall be free from them in heaven.' True, if they gain admission there at all ; but how much higher a place they would have by seeking grace to conquer the faults now ! They rest in a vague general idea that heaven's blessedness is perfect, but 'one star differeth from another star in glory.' Let me illustrate this : suppose three musicians, one rather deaf, another with average hearing, the third able to catch the faintest sound. At a considerable

distance a skilful performer is seated at a magnificent organ. He draws out the loud stops, touches the loud pedals, and the deaf man says, 'How grand!' Then the organist changes the stops and pedals, and the deaf man loses much, whilst the other two say, 'How beautiful!' Presently he changes the stops altogether, and glides into what sounds like sweet spirit-music from afar. The man of keen hearing says, 'How exquisite!' the other says nothing; and the deaf man says, 'He has left off.' So will it be in Paradise; the glorious harmony never ceases, but we, who are only average Christians (if that), little know how much of it we shall for ever miss. The measure of our capacity for bliss is being formed now—*now, to-day*.

20. Then came the last, not with trembling step and downcast face and beating heart, but with insulting words, and no misgivings at all. Fatal security! more dangerous than a thousand fears. Many recluses living soured useless disappointed lives in nunneries, do what this man did—bury their talent till it dwindles to nothing. Neglect to use your right hand for a few years, and it will have lost its cunning for ever. This slothful servant had not spent his pound on himself, nor given it to the rebellious citizens; there it was intact, but there were no results to show for it.

21. How insolent his reasoning! God expects much, *therefore* he yields nothing beyond the bare pound entrusted to him. 'My Lord gave me a pound; here it is—I restore it. He "sowed" a pound; let him reap it.' What a mighty famine would destroy the human race if a grain of God's good gift of corn only yielded a grain! Does He expect much? Well He may, from those to whom He gave *all*, even 'that unspeakable gift,' His only begotten Son.

22. The master takes the servant's own account of matters as expressing, not the hardness which he basely imputes, but the strictness with which he requires a profitable return. An easy indolent mistress has an unsatisfactory household; the children who describe their mother or teacher as 'not particular,' seldom turn out creditably.

27. This refers primarily to the destruction of the Jews, but also to the doom of the impenitent.

28-38. See Matt. xxi. 1-11.

38. How grand a hymn of praise! 'Peace in heaven,' that no foe can trouble, no storm can break; peace, sweet, sweet peace! O Saviour, bring us thither when life's turmoil ends!

39. Such words were beyond the proud Pharisees' endurance. Jesus often rebuked the disciples, but never for loving and praising Him.

40. As though on this His last entrance into Jerusalem, such Hosannahs must welcome Him, that the very stones would greet Him were human hearts cold, human lips mute. Had they indeed 'cried out,' it would hardly have been more astonishing than when an angel's presence taught a dumb ass not only to speak, but to reason, in her wonderful dialogue with Balaam.

41. 'He wept over it': they were bitter tears—tears wrung from very anguish. He had done so much for them, He was about to give them His very life; yet even amidst the Hosannahs there were jarring notes from murmuring Pharisees; and His prophetic ear heard in an under-tone another cry, 'Crucify Him!' and the despairing cries and moans of hundreds of thousands when, in the destruction of the city, not very many years later, they passed from earth's fiercest woes to the undying anguish of lost souls. Christ's tears; let us ponder them. How the angels, who were doubtless never far from Him, must have yearned to comfort Him!

42. 'If thou hadst known.' How easily they might have known, had they chosen! *We* say sometimes, 'If I had known how soon I should lose such or such a friend or relative, I would have heeded her counsel. Oh that I had!' It is too late to value our blessings when they are 'hid from our eyes.' In this transitory life, 'passing away' is written on everything: joys and sorrows alike die out while we are experiencing them. 'The things which belong unto peace.' What are they? One of the names of Christ's most mysterious antitype, Melchizedek, is 'King of peace' (Heb. vii. 2).

43. The Romans built a wooden rampart round the doomed city ; and, when this was burnt, a wall, four miles in circuit, erected in three days, so marvellous is disciplined energy. Thus no food could enter—no starving Jew could creep out ; they were shut in to horrors unutterable, unparalleled ; raging against each other like wild beasts. No help from earth, polluted with their crimes ; no help from heaven, outraged by the rejection and crucifixion of the Son of God.

44. How literally fulfilled ! One little fragment of an old wall alone remains, under which the Jews sit and weep over the fall of their city ; very probably even this fragment may be less ancient than they fondly think. Modern Jerusalem literally stands upon the buried ruins of the former city, and discoveries full of interest are being constantly made by excavating.* Titus most earnestly desired to save the beautiful Temple, but it perished in spite of every effort.

45, 46. See Matt. xxi. 12, 13.

47, 48. These were His last efforts to gather them in ; and the people hung upon His words.

CHAPTER XX.

1-19. SEE Matt. xxi. 23-45. 'Came upon Him.' The very words sound hostile.

2. 'These things' had offended the priests and Scribes ; little cared *they* for the pollution of the Temple.

9. 'The husbandmen' were the spiritual guides of the people.

10. The parables of the pound and the talents seem to refer to the reckoning at the close of life—the final winding up for

* Not long ago, a gentleman, standing on the site of the Temple, suddenly missed his little dog, which uttered cries of distress, but could nowhere be found. At last he was seen through a small opening in the ground, on a ledge out of reach. The hole was enlarged, the dog rescued from his prison, in a vast quarry before unknown, where, nearly three thousand years previously, materials were excavated for building Solomon's Temple. Explorers found some of the very tools used by hands that have been dust for nearly thirty centuries, and a small ledge that had once held a light, for the part just above it was still blackened with its smoke.

same fruit—God seems to refer to the regular and continual fruit-bearing of a Christian's whole life. Ask yourselves, 'is mine a fruitful life?' and observe the fruits vary as different ages and changing circumstances: the fruit-bearing of a Christian child is not that of an adult—it would be forced and unnatural were. Those Christians who live habitually in the sunny side of the Cross bear the ripest, richest fruit; we must be dwellers in the Light. If you are Christ's, be fruitful—be happy. He likes His children's faces to look joyous; and if you give your first best years to Him, He will make you fruitful.

17. In these words, 'What shall I do?' God seems as if communing, or taking counsel with Himself; but He is thus represented in dependence to our ideas, which cannot soar to the smallest comprehension of His completeness. Not even an angel can 'by searching, find out God'; the infinite lies far beyond the grasp of the finite.

18. Luke alone gives their answering words—'God forbid.'

19. The Jews were to be doubly crushed, nationally and individually.

20. 'That very hour': such was their rage.

20-22. Matt. xxii. 16-33.

20. After consulting together, they sent forth spies, who 'feigned themselves to be righteous.' Human nature takes readily to this form of hypocrisy.

21. How wonderful His patience in listening to this, knowing them and their base object: not uncloaking them before the people—not even asking, 'Why then do ye not follow Me?'

27. The Sadducees were materialists, apparently only believing what they could see; if there be no resurrection body, no angel, nor spirit, then the grave bounds man's whole horizon. Thank God for the light beyond, which makes 'the grave and gate of death' only the portal of our Father's House.

35. 'Accounted worthy'; it is not said, 'They which shall be worthy.' Explain this.

36. 'Neither can they die any more.' 'It is appointed

unto men *once* to die.' In what sense did Christ 'abolish death,' seeing that men die by thousands daily ?

40. 'After that they durst not.' The Scribes enjoyed their triumph over the Sadducees, but both parties were alike foiled as regarded Christ.

41-44. See Matt. xxii. 41-46.

45-47. See Matt. xxiii. 1-14.

47. Making long prayers for a pretence must be specially hateful to God. To be acceptable, prayer must be earnest, humble, submissive, persevering, not silenced by apparent failure. We must pray in faith, nothing doubting ; and with thanksgiving for past mercies. Profoundly humble prayer, under the Holy Spirit's guidance, and in Christ's dear Name, is generally successful ; a simple casting of ourselves upon God through Christ is a sure way to 'an answer of peace.'

CHAPTER XXI.

1-4. MARK xii. 41-44.

5-38. See Matt. xxiv. 1-44.

11. 'Great signs,' etc. Josephus describes a star like a sword hanging over the city ; a comet, visible for a year, and chariots and horses fighting in the air, seen all over the country.

14. 'Settle it therefore,' etc. : let it be rooted and grounded in your hearts. It is a great thing to be able to say, 'O God, my heart is fixed.'

15. Give instances of this from the Acts ; and illustrate the distinction between 'a mouth' and 'wisdom' from Exod. iv. 10-16.

17. This hatred is not extinct yet, though far more external reverence is paid to religion now than a hundred years ago. Simeon's experiences in his earlier years at Cambridge were so bitterly painful, that once, when walking in the streets, he burst into tears because a poor man touched his cap to him.

19. It is a blessed thing to be patient. How may we acquire this happy secret ? Remember that eternal gain may be the result of a transient sorrow. The impatient lose possession of themselves altogether.

22. 'The days of vengeance.' A more terrible day still is coming, when there will be no Pella to flee to. What will be our condition then? Rejected mercy becomes the direst wrath.

23. 'Great distress upon the land, and wrath,' etc. Show the connection between these.

24. 'Led captive.' How wondrously fulfilled! The Jews are a standing miracle—oppressed, wronged, down-trodden, yet a separate people still; their nationality so strongly marked, that if we meet a Jew in the street we recognise him instantly for a descendant of Abraham. Streets in countless cities are known as the Jews' quarter; London has its Old Jewry. Thank God, England has for the most part, especially since the Reformation, befriended the Jews, and that is probably one secret of her prosperity, for 'they shall prosper that love thee'; and though it can hardly be said that as a nation we *love* the Jews, still we have given them shelter, and safety, and peace in our borders; and England's mighty heart thrills with just indignation at their ill-usage in some foreign countries. It would have seemed more likely that the grand old Romans should have continued a separate race; but there is not one of them left. The supple, crafty Italian, with concealed stiletto, resembles a Roman as little as a wild cat resembles a St. Bernard dog. Of course, their strict avoidance of marriage with Gentiles has been the direct cause of the continuance of the unbroken Jewish type, and there is some deep reason for this. 'The times of the Gentiles'; i.e. till the Gentiles have enjoyed their full share of that place in the Church which the Jews had before them.

26. 'Men's hearts fainting for fear.' Ah! there will be good reason for it; for in this case the danger will infinitely exceed the fear, however great. Matthew says, that when the sign of the Son of Man appears, 'then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn.' He might have come to all, He *will* come to many, as 'the Desire of all nations'; but the careless and the ungodly have too good reason to dread the awful severity of an offended Judge.

28. 'Lift up your heads'; too often bowed beneath the burden of sin and sorrow.

34. We are here cautioned against all such bodily indulgences as weaken the soul, and also against those heart-dividing cares which come in between us and God, even when we are on our knees in supplication to Him. We should often say, 'Lord, pardon my prayers.'

36. 'As a snare'; in its suddenness, in its being entirely unlooked-for. Even a bird will not entangle itself in a snare spread before its eyes. Are *we* as wise? Do *we* avoid what we know hurts our souls?

36. 'Watch ye, making supplication.' Christ constantly enjoins these two great duties. Why?

'Thou art in the midst of foes,
Therefore watch and pray.'

38. Well might they rise early for these His last teachings, though little knowing that they were the last. Most likely, on His final visit to His faithful friends at Bethany, which stands on the eastern slope of the Mount of Olives, they were quite unaware that His weary footstep would never cross their threshold more. The *last time* often comes and goes unrecognised—the last conversation with a loving Christian friend, the last Bible-class, the last sermon, the last Sabbath upon earth, and then Eternity!

CHAPTER XXII.

1-6. SEE Matt. xxvi. 1-5.

1. Our time for keeping Good Friday can never be very far wrong, since our Easter answers to the Jewish passover; but in the year 1874, Good Friday fell on the actual anniversary. We have nothing to fix the time of the glad festival of Christmas, or any of the memorial days depending upon it—the Circumcision, the Epiphany, the Purification, and the Annunciation.

7-13. See Matt. xxvi. 17-19.

13. This was told us for the completion of the narrative, not for the confirmation of our faith.

14-17. The lamb was killed between three and six p.m.

14. 'When the hour was come.' How memorable an hour!

15. 'With desire I have desired.' This repetition has great power and intensity. 'Before I suffer'; He speaks quite plainly now. Ere another day had ended, the warfare and the suffering would be accomplished, as in God's good time ours will.

16. It was to be their last passover as well as His.

17. This cup appears to have been the first of several partaken of during the service. Communicants do not now 'divide it among' themselves; perhaps this was altered in the days of the Apostles; see 1 Cor. xi. 20-22.

18. See Matt. xxvi. 29.

19, 20. See Matt. xxvi. 26-28.

19. The two Romish errors of transubstantiation and consubstantiation led the Reformers to be very guarded in using Christ's own words only, in consecrating the bread and wine. Transubstantiation is the error of thinking that the bread and wine are really become Christ's body and blood; consubstantiation, that of thinking that the bread is at once bread and Christ's flesh—the cup, wine and His blood.

21-23. See Matt. xxvi. 21-25.

21. 'With Me on the table'; partaking of the same dish. *Judas* at the first communion! 'Goeth.' Whither? Ah! to Calvary, to bear your sins and mine.

24-30. 'A contention among them' for pre-eminence. What! *then*? Perhaps it had been stirred by seeing the whole Paschal arrangements entrusted to Peter and John. Little thought they what a sifting-time was close at hand. *Our* sifting-time may come just as unexpectedly. O Saviour, our one only Helper, suffer *us* not in that solemn hour to fall from Thee, for we are weaker far than they! O Holy Spirit, keep us, dwell in us, lead us safely onward to that blessed Home, where no temptation enters, no heart ever fails! Soon the days of weakness will be over, the victory won through Christ.

25. These coveted honours are for the world; Christ has something far higher for His own.

26. 'He that is the greater,' let him be gentle, tender, 'easy to be entreated.' 'He that is chief,' etc.; the head of a house should minister to all within it, feel responsible for the comfort of each. Power is never given to us for ourselves, but for others; for their good, not to make *us* more important.

27. There is no shame in voluntarily *taking* the lowest room in loving service to others; there *is* shame in being *sent down* to it from a higher place into which we have thrust ourselves.

28. How generous this praise of their past faithfulness, in the very hour of coming desertion! Eleven of them had been true to Him, and would be again, even unto death; therefore they shall not lose His testimony to their fidelity by the cowardice of one terrible moment.

29. 'Appoint unto you a kingdom.' Christ, as man, was on the eve of a shameful agonising death; Christ, as God, appoints kingdoms, but not of this world.

30. 'My table.' He then sat at another's table, in a room lent Him for His last supper. What sublime contrasts His life presents! He Who had nothing, not even a roof of His own upon earth, yet possessed all things.

31. 'Simon, Simon'! notice the solemn repetition, and that he is not in this verse addressed as Peter; truly he was no 'rock' on this occasion. Satan *asked* to have him. Thank God that he *has* to ask, ere he can touch one of us. We see this in the history of Job, and what fearful power our great enemy has. Peter might have escaped his wiles altogether; hand in hand with Jesus, or close at His side at the judgment-hall, he would never have been asked, 'Art thou also one of this man's disciples?' Oh! for nearness to Christ; there is our only safety.

32. 'That thy faith fail not;' *i.e.* permanently. 'When thou hast turned again,' not 'if' thou returnest, 'stablish thy brethren'; this he did both by example and precept. There are few more strengthening chapters in the Bible than his first Epistle, and the first chapter of the second Epistle.

33. Honest loving disciple! how little he knew his own

weakness, which the next few hours would bring to light, never to be veiled from him again! Where we feel most sure of ourselves, there we fall. We should utterly distrust self, and cleave to Christ with absolute confidence. Had the soldiers at that moment carried off Christ, perhaps Peter would have gone with Him; he was in a measure prepared for this, but like the rest of us he was unprepared for what really occurred, the maidservant's question. That 'following afar off' was the beginning of the end.

34. How one marvels that this warning did not put him on his guard! No Christian man ever falls into sin without a warning from conscience, God's inner voice, in all cases in which it deters from any course. Years must have passed ere the cock-crowing ceased to smite on Peter's memory. The undying worm is the emblem of undying memory in the world of lost souls, haunted evermore by remorseful thoughts of sins committed, mercy rejected, eternal life for ever forfeited, and *for what?*

35, 36. Hitherto they had gone forth under a miraculous provision; like the children of a rich and loving Father, they had not needed to make their own necessities their care, whatever they required had been forthcoming. Now, in a certain sense, they were at their own charges, and dependent on their own resources. Such is the general law of Providence, but it has been well said, 'This is a world in which circumstances are always changing, and in which God interferes for ever.'

37. 'He was reckoned,' etc. Find the reference here, and state how it was fulfilled.

38. They seem to have thought that the swords were for present defence; this may account for Peter's rash act in cutting off the right ear of Malchus. Who was he?

39-46. Matt. xxvi. 30-41.

40. How appropriate and how solemn the warning!

41. He withdrew to suffer His keenest anguish alone; we, too, sometimes go down into the depths of sorrow where no sympathy can follow us but *His*.

43. Blessed angel, sent to strengthen *Him* !

44. What but unutterable anguish could have caused this !

47-53. See Matt. xxvi. 47-55.

47. See John xviii. 2. 'Judas knew the place.' Oh ! base use to make of past intimacy with Christ's ways and resorts !

49. They did wisely in asking this, but they waited for no answer. Who else asked a very important question without waiting for an answer ? See John xviii. 38. We, too, sometimes ask guidance and do not wait for it, but just act on our own impulse, before God's Providence opens the right door, or closes wrong ones.

53. 'This is your hour,' of apparent victory, 'and the power of darkness.' Yes, Satan was putting his utmost resources to the test.

54-62. See Matt. xxvi. 57-75.

54. Am *I* following Christ closely, or at a perilous distance ? We deny Him by every light word or tone that belies the faith that is in us, even by a smile of levity assumed to hide our religion from those who might scoff at us. Never obtrude it ; it is like carrying a small flickering taper out of doors, where the first breath of air may extinguish it. Those who are most true to Christ do not chatter about their religion, they *live* it ; and when out of the abundance of the heart the mouth does speak, it is in earnest, fitting words.

55. Temptation generally finds us in idle self-indulgent moments. Hard work may have its snares, but it has also its safeguards. Adam worked in Paradise ; had Eve worked too, beside him, the serpent would less easily have beguiled her.

56. The maid gazed earnestly upon him. Perhaps his shrinking demeanour betrayed him ; it was hard for honest Peter to act a part.

57. The first denial. How few the words ! how great the sin !

58. A fresh temptation met him in the porch. See Matt. xxvi. 71. This second denial was doubtless far easier than

the first. More than one taunted him—a man, as well as the maid.

59. The Galilean accent had a more Syrian cast than that of Judæa; the accent varies greatly in different English counties. Had Peter sat silent, this would not have been noticed; but he seems to have tried to make himself one of the party by joining in the fireside-talk. One's heart aches for him, following these details. The nobler the man, the sadder the fall; and few nobler men than Peter ever lived. Let us each ask ourselves the solemn question, 'Should *I* have been more faithful?'

60. Mark, who drew his materials largely from Peter, is the only one who goes into every detail respecting the two cock-crowings. How wonderful that the first cock-crowing, after the first denial, did not awaken his memory and conscience! This record shows how vividly he recollected it in after-life.

61-62. Was ever such a look cast upon mortal man? Love, compassion, tenderness, and sorrow must have so blended in it as almost to quench rebuke. Reproach alone, richly as he deserved it, might have hardened him; love broke his heart. What a lesson for us in our dealings with others! Judas was afraid to keep the betrayal-money, and went and hanged himself; but we do not read that he wept. Peter's was the sin of one unguarded hour; the crime of Judas was the climax of years of hypocrisy and treachery.

63-65. Matt. xxvi. 67, 68. The recorded wrongs, of which it wrings any loving faithful heart to think, are only a few of those He suffered. We need not wonder at our trials if, without one murmuring word, He bore all this.

66. 'As soon as it was day.' What a night ended with that dawn! what a day it ushered in!

67, 68. Had they ever believed Him to be the Christ, they might not have loved, though they would have feared Him. The natural heart is 'enmity against God': not simply indifferent or forgetful.

69-71. See Matt. xxvi. 63-66.

69, 70. Luke says they all said, 'Art Thou, then, the Son of God?' Doubtless the high priest was the speaker for the rest. Fancy the malignity with which they hung upon His answer! To say 'I am,' was in their view to proclaim Himself a blasphemer; to say 'I am not,' was to deny Himself and His teaching. The dark scowling faces draw nearer: the flashing Jewish eyes glare upon Him in the intensity with which they listen. Then comes the thrilling answer—'From henceforth shall the Son of man be seated at the right hand of God.' What a day it will be when they, remembering all this, confounded in the dust before their Omnipotent Judge, will hear their awful doom! 'In the day of judgment, Good Lord deliver *us*.'

71. They brought matters to an issue as quickly as they could, conscious that they had no case against Him, of which Pilate could take cognizance. They had tried, as Matthew and Mark tell us, one false witness after another, but with strangely little success. Satan must have winced, for their lies accorded so badly that it was difficult to make any two agree in the false charges.

CHAPTER XXIII.

1-5. SEE Matt. xxvii. 1, 2, and 11-14.

1. 'The whole company of them rose up'; not *one* to take His part. Truly was that prophecy fulfilled, 'I have trodden the winepress *alone*'! How profane is the cry, 'Vox populi, vox Dei'!

2. Notice the utter untruthfulness of this charge as to the tribute-money. Not long before, He had distinctly told those who questioned Him, 'Render to Cæsar,' etc. On a different occasion, He had wrought a marvellous miracle to pay the Temple tribute. See Matt. xvii. 27. His doing this at a place where He was not present seems even more astonishing than that His actual *touch* should heal the blind. There is but one possible explanation of the miracle of the fish; viz., that Christ is God.

3. Explain in what sense He called Himself King of the Jews ; and in what sense Pilate probably understood Him.

5. What a testimony to His unwearied labours !

6, 7. Pilate gladly sent Christ to Herod, to free himself from the dilemma of an unjust condemnation, or an unpopular release.

8, 9. Herod, who had come to Jerusalem to keep the Pass-over, hoped to see some miracle which would divert him—as the Philistines sported with their blind captive Samson ; but it ended ill with them, and worse with Herod. The Roman Pilate contrasts favourably with Herod the Jew, who might have known the truth if he would. Christ answered Pilate more than once ; of Herod's many words He took no notice. The Herods were a vile family ; this one was the murderer of the Baptist, and he is even baser now. *Then*, he felt compunction ; now, he mocks and scorns—one sin paves a broad road for another.

10. People who are vehement in accusing others are generally in the wrong ; truth commands belief without violent declamation. Vehemence proves weakness, either in the pleader or the cause, or both.

11. They were stung by His refusal to answer, or to work any miracle for their sport. What is the meaning of 'set Him at nought' ? The 'gorgeous apparel' was in derision of His kingly claim. In sending Him back to Pilate, Herod shares the guilt of all that followed ; it was virtually sending Him to death (Acts iv. 27). How the loving, watching angels must have felt these indignities to their Lord !

12. Enmity is always an evil, but friendship is not always a good.

13-15. In these verses, given only in St. Luke, we have Pilate's second effort to establish Christ's innocence. 'Nothing worthy of death hath been done by Him.' He states publicly that neither he nor Herod could find Him guilty in any of the matters laid to His charge.

16. Now comes the first sign of yielding, or he never would

have spoken of chastising an innocent man, after all the harass and sufferings of the past night. Evidently it was meant as a compromise with conscience, and it ended as such compromises always do.

17-23. See Matt. xxvii. 15-23.

19. This verse is one of the parentheses of Scripture. Mention others.

20-22. Pilate's third effort to save Him; but fear of the people was stronger than conscience. Perhaps he dreaded the displeasure of Tiberius if there were a serious tumult, or if the matter were misrepresented to him; 'the fear of man bringeth a snare.' 'They cried out all together,' not taking a moment for consideration or mutual counsel.

24, 25. Pilate yields at last, as we are all too apt to do unless upheld by a strength beyond our own. Doubtless, like Darius, he went home heavy-hearted, 'sore displeased with himself'; but it was too late, the sin was committed, Jesus delivered to their will. It was done then, and in this world there is no *undoing*; no, nor in the next. This is true of what you and I are doing *to-day*. Life is a web that can never be unwoven; the tangled threads of yesterday will form part of its structure for ever. It is a solemn thing to live.

26. See Matt. xxvii. 32.

27. It is at least a comfort that no women's voices seem to have swelled the tumult before Pilate, and that we hear them now uplifted in wailing and lamentation on the Via Dolorosa, the sad road to Calvary.

28. He had not spoken to the rabble, but He speaks now to the pitying women.

29. In the fearful straits of the siege, mothers, agonized by the sight of famished babes, would envy the childless, and those whose treasures were in the little children's Home, where they neither hunger nor thirst, nor weep.

30. What a picture of dread and desolation! Who would wish a mountain to crush him, if but a ray of hope remained?

Life without hope, death without hope. May God keep us from such awful perdition ! See Rev. vi. 16. 'The green tree,' prepared to resist the fire. If such things befall the Lamb of God, what shall await those who provoke the flames !

32. See the fulfilment of the prophecy, 'He was numbered with the transgressors.'

33-35. See Matt. xxvii. 33-42.

33. Calvary, of no note before, became from this moment the most sacred spot on earth ; how treasured the memories, how bright the hopes which that hallowed name awakens !

34. Only Luke gives this prayer. Perhaps these tender words opened the heart of one of the thieves ; certainly it was love that won him, for love wins us all.

39-43. See Matt. xxvii. 44.

42. Who in the Old Testament asked to be remembered by a fellow-sufferer ? (Gen. xl. 14.) For two long years of prosperity the chief butler 'forgot him.' Not so Jesus. He never forgets one soul that clings to Him. Am *I* clinging to my Saviour ?

43. We are apt to say of the blessed dead that they are in heaven ; strictly speaking we should say they are in Paradise, where we may confidently believe that they are happy to the full measure of their capacity ; and that after the reunion of soul and body at the resurrection, that capacity will be largely increased. None have come back to tell us what the joys of Paradise are, but we may safely trust Him Who even here, in the hospital part of His kingdom, gives us so many sweet pleasures. We shall be with Him, 'we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.' There is a strange power and sweetness in the words, 'the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.' If the *leaves* are healing, what must the fruit of that tree of life be ? How many bruised hearts are yearning for that blessed time ! There is deep pathos in the last words of some of God's suffering children. One who had known specially deep sorrow through life, was heard saying on her death-bed, 'I

shall be calm, I shall be happy, I shall be well. I shall have no more trouble, shall I? *No.*

44. See Matt. xxvii. 45. It would not be total darkness, for in that case no one could have seen what passed on the cross; it was a heavy pall of preternatural gloom.

45-47. See Matt. xxvii. 51-54.

46. During the horror of darkness and apparent desertion, He addressed God as 'Eli, Eli,' 'My God, My God.' How the Father's heart must have yearned over Him then! but now He again calls Him 'Father.' See Psa. xxxi. 5.

47. If a righteous man, then most certainly was He 'the Son of God,' as both Matthew and Mark give it: no righteous man, who was *only* man, would have advanced a claim so impious. Possibly the first impression of the centurion was that One so infinitely patient, so loving, so prayerful, so forgiving, must be a righteous person. Then doubtless His dying words, the darkness and the earthquake, convinced him that the Sufferer was indeed all that He claimed to be. How often must he have blessed God for the memory of Calvary! He avowed his faith boldly when His own disciples had forsaken Him.

48. These portents struck terror into many who had before watched His sufferings with calm indifference, some even with taunts. Those who can be moved by no appeal to the heart, or the conscience, are often accessible enough to superstitious terrors.

49-53. See Matt. xxvii. 55-60.

50, 51. 'A councillor'; *i.e.* a member of the Sanhedrim. 'Had not consented'; perhaps he had openly protested against it.

54-56. Friday being nearly ended, little time remained for their loving hallowed work. This was the last office they were to render to Him, angel hands were to minister to Him henceforth. Having taken great notice how His body was laid, they hastened into Jerusalem, to purchase more spices and ointment, though Nicodemus had made such ample provision.

What a sad Sabbath Easter Eve must have been to these faithful hearts, but how bright the coming dawn ! There never was a night so dark and sorrowful but that they to whom its long hours were dreariest saw daybreak at last. 'Heaviness may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.' How glorious to those loving weeping women was that glad Easter morn ! Oh, risen Saviour, may we, like Thyself, 'through the grave and gate of death, pass to our joyful resurrection.'

CHAPTER XXIV.

1-12. SEE Matt. xxviii. 1-8.

3. The anticipated difficulty was gone ; but, as often happens, a new and utterly unexpected one arose. Notice, however, and this again is a frequent experience in life, the actual difficulty proved to be a blessing far beyond their hopes. Many dark clouds never break over our heads, we only dread them ; and those which do, often fall in showers of mercy.

4. Matthew and Mark speak of one angel, Luke and John of two. Probably one was inside the Holy Sepulchre, and therefore unseen at the first moment. Well might the absence of their Lord perplex them with thoughts of some fresh trouble.

5. 'Why seek ye the Living among the dead ?' *i.e.* how could He be 'holden of death' longer than He said ?

6, 7. He quotes a whole sentence of Christ's, as though he had himself heard it. Perhaps he had ; certainly he wondered that they had forgotten it.

8. The whole came back as a flash of lightning to their minds. Memory is a marvellous faculty ; we seem totally to forget things, but there they are, and may come back to us even in old age : forgotten instructions, forgotten love, forgotten *sins*. God may teach me to say some word to-day which you will apparently forget in two minutes, and yet it may influence you for good twenty years hence. Meanwhile, it will be buried, not lost. The difference between those two words is never felt so deeply as when

'Homeward, from some grave beloved, we turn.'

10. It is well to specify thus the names of the holy women who first spread the glad tidings. Luke viii. 3 mentions Joanna.

11. 'Idle talk.' How astonishing this when the women would not fail to tell how the angel had spoken of His words in Galilee! They had seen Him raise the dead Lazarus after four days, yet they doubted His own resurrection after a much shorter interval.

12. Peter and John were the first to go and see for themselves what this wondrous history meant (John xx. 2-10).

13. And now we come to the story of the walk to Emmaus. The two disciples probably lived there, and were going sorrowfully home after the Passover.

14. As they went, they spoke of the subject which filled their hearts. Do *you* speak together of Christ? If week after week passes, and no word for the Master is breathed by any of you, does that look like love? Is that being true to Him? Is it not much more like being ashamed of Him?

15. While they talked of Him He drew near. So it is now; while you are speaking of Him to a companion, He comes to *you*. You feel a secret gladness, or a tender hush of peace, coming, though you may not know it, from His near presence. You did not see or hear Him, but, in a higher sense than the poet's, you felt

'The waving of His hands that blest.'

Do not let false shame, or weak timidity, deprive you of so dear a privilege as this. See Mal. iii. 16, 17.

16. 'Their eyes were holden'; their power of recognition being perhaps purposely dimmed, or surely they would have known Him by His voice, although He appeared, Mark says, 'in another form.' Our faculties vary much with varying circumstances; sometimes they are numb and almost torpid, at other times quickened into intense activity.

17. Had they been talking of trivial things He would hardly have joined them in their walk; but they were evidently speaking with most sorrowful earnestness.

18. Cleopas thought: 'If He knows not what has been taking place in Jerusalem, He can only be a sojourner there; if He does know, how can He think that we spoke of anything else?'

19. In answer, Cleopas despondingly, but with wonderful bravery, tells what had passed: only venturing to speak of Him as a prophet, not as the Son of God, so shaken was his faith. Yet He could not even be a true prophet, if, being only man, He claimed to be God. Christ's object in asking 'What things?' had been to lead them to open their sorrows to Him, to give them the relief of telling all to One Who can help as well as pity. This is just what He would have us do, though He knows better far than we do what it really is that weighs down our hearts. Very often it is not the trouble itself so much as our own resisting will; let us try to bring to Him every burden, to cast it off from our own weak hearts upon Christ's strong one.

20. How graphically and simply they tell it! Those in deep trouble generally announce it in few words; surface sorrow utters many, profound grief has little to say except to God, till the worn heart feels His healing touch. In the account given by Cleopas and his companion, they trace all to the human agents. Could they have seen the other side of the history, how it would have changed their thoughts!

21. There is deep pathos in this verse. Many passages in Scripture are among the most pathetic utterances on record. Mention some. This is partly from their brevity, their perfect truthfulness, no exaggeration, no straining for effect; the very heart speaks. Disappointment is crushing in proportion to previous hope. In this case *He* had died and been buried, Who they hoped would redeem Israel. It had been a terrible blow to these true hearts, and now their hope lay in ashes; their trust was shattered. It was all over—nothing to be done, nothing to be looked for. They had expected so much from Him, and it had all ended in a malefactor's death. Their great prophet had not delivered His country—He could not even save Himself.

22-24. To add to their perplexities, certain women of their company had told a strange tale of His being in the grave no longer. Were His enemies base enough to disturb even His sepulchral rest? What did it all mean? Was there a vision of angels, or was it some disordered fancy of the women's troubled minds? True it was that the grave was empty, but 'Him they saw not,' living or dead; He was utterly gone. To these loving, simple hearts, the resurrection tidings, little understood, and less believed, brought only deeper gloom; and all the while the risen Saviour, the Friend so deeply mourned, was walking at their side.

25. Well might His first words be a gentle rebuke for their lack of faith and understanding!

26. Through the 'gate of death'—and *such* a death—He was to enter into His glory. He had come from glory, and was returning to it, and this was the road He took. Do not think, if some great trial comes, 'God is leading me Home by a strange way.' If He led His only beloved Son by the way of Gethsemane and Calvary, can we wonder if He leads *us* by painful, thorny paths? Rather should we marvel at His tenderness in giving us so many glad songs in our pilgrimage, that life, notwithstanding its trials, is after all bright and happy to His children.

27. Observe how He enforces the Old Testament Scripture. Mention a few of the passages to which He may have referred, beginning with Genesis, and taking the sacred books in order. If Satan could take out of the Old Testament every reference to Christ, what a mutilated book it would be! Where the noble arch of Truth now rises far above the river of 'human care and crime,' there would remain only a few disjointed fragments, hurled hither and thither in the turbid current.

28. 'He made as though,' etc. Unasked, He would no doubt have gone farther; He left every place where His stay was not desired. Often, too, even when we are longing for Him, He intensifies that longing by tarrying till our very hearts cry, 'Oh! that I knew where I might find Him!' When

He came to succour His disciples on the lake, He let them see Him calmly walking on the water ere He joined them. What a marvellous sight they would have missed had He entered the ship instantaneously ! His time is the best ; trust Him with absolute confidence.

29. ' Abide with us.' Is that the desire of our hearts ? Do we feel that His dear presence can supply every void ? He can enter into our griefs with an exquisitely tender sympathy, of which a mother's is but a faint type. ' It is toward evening ' ; the night is fast drawing on. You must not think that only the aged are come to life's even-tide ; sometimes a voice whispers to the young as well as the old,

' I am at hand, work faster ;
Behold the sunset glow.'

Give yourselves heartily to Him now ; and then, whether your day be long or short, there will be a light upon your path that never shone from sun or star ; a light shining brighter and brighter ' unto the perfect day.' ' He went in to abide with them,' as they besought Him ; and if you entreat Him He will come in to you.

30, 31. He seems to have taken the master's, not the guest's, place at table ; and as He blessed and brake the bread, and gave it to them, the scene of the Last Supper, of which they had doubtless heard from the eleven, recurred to their minds, and they knew Him. In that moment of recognition He was gone, but it was enough. Even in the ordinary sense we seldom fully know people while they are with us ; death is the great revealer of what a man was, and at the great day of judgment the revelation will be complete. How shall I stand when all secrets are unveiled ?

32. Well might their hearts burn within them during such converse ! Do *your* hearts glow sometimes when you speak of Him ? ' Opened to us the Scripture.' The Scriptures are like a cave full of jewels—the door must be opened ere we can enter, and the Holy Spirit's light must illumine its recesses ; then, indeed, we find it an unexhausted, inexhaustible store.

33. Up they rose to walk back to Jerusalem: no matter the fatigue, or the approach of night. What recked they of either? Late as it must have been on their arrival, they found the Apostles gathered together.

34. 'The Lord is risen indeed,' was the joyful cry that greeted them—no doubt remained now—'and hath appeared to Simon.' What passed at *that* interview, no pen has told us.

35. Having heard this wondrous account, they tell of the glad recognition at Emmaus, thus mutually confirming each other's faith.

36. As before, while they were speaking of Him, He came. 'Peace be unto you.' 'Peace' was Christ's legacy before His death; 'peace' is His resurrection greeting, even to those poor faithless ones who had forsaken Him in His deepest need—left Him to suffer and die *alone*. What a fountain of love and forgiveness Christ's heart must be! Do not be afraid to come just as you are to such a tender Saviour.

37, 38. Though they now knew that He was risen, yet His sudden appearance, perhaps without opening the door, so startled them, that they thought it was His spirit, not Himself. On one occasion, it is expressly mentioned that 'the doors were shut' (John xx. 26), yet He stood in their midst.

39. Truly the resurrection body is a great mystery. On the walk to Emmaus, He perhaps came to the wayfarers straight from heaven, none seeing how or whence He had come. Yet His sacred body had flesh and bones, hands and feet—nay, *pierced* hands and feet, and the spear-thrust was in His side. How astonishing is all this! He says, 'A spirit hath not flesh and bones,' etc.: one of the few things that Scripture tells us about spirits. More, perhaps, would be incomprehensible to us; but one day we shall know and understand. Till then it is difficult to form any idea of a body which has flesh and bones, but (apparently) not flesh and *blood*: 'the blood is the life' of the animal body. How graciously He speaks, 'Handle Me and see'! To Mary Magdalene He had said on that same day, 'Touch Me not'; yet *she* had never

forsaken Him—the eleven had. Possibly their weaker faith needed double assurance.

40. Picture their countenances as they gazed on the nail-prints—love, awe, joy, and grief all struggling for expression. Perhaps joy was the paramount feeling, that His sufferings were ended, death vanquished, His Godhead absolutely proved; and, to crown all, their own faithless desertion pardoned. Oh! pitying, forgiving Saviour, teach us also to forgive!

41-43. It seemed too good to be true; therefore, to satisfy them fully, He asks, 'Have ye here anything to eat?' Had He willed it, a table, spread with the fruits of Paradise, could have instantly appeared, but that would have bewildered them still more. The simple question, and the little consultation amongst themselves to find what food they had, proved that it was no vision such as that of Peter on the housetop (Acts x.), but an actual fact; for He took the simple fare, 'and did eat before them.'

44. 'While I was yet with you.' These touching words imply that, except for a few brief glimpses, He was no longer with them. Yet, though our eyes cannot see Him, nor our ears hear Him, we may have at any moment His felt presence; a single cry for help can bring Him—can array on our behalf 'the infinite resources of God.' What a sore loss to us if we live our lives alone without Him, or *chiefly* alone, with only brief instants of communion with Him! What is communion with God? Surely it is opening our hearts to Him, in the assurance that He is listening to our poor broken words, comprehending us and our case, and our difficulties, as no human soul can ever understand another. The law of Moses, the prophets and the Psalms, were the three Jewish divisions of the Old Testament, which closed 420 years before the birth of Christ.

45. 'Then opened He,' etc. This shows His direct access to the human spirit, and absolute power over it. He does not tell them of His own wondrous history before the worlds began, or unfold prophetic visions of the future. He takes

their own Old Testament Scriptures, and says, Study these. Do not merely *read* the Bible, 'mark, learn, and inwardly digest it'—*feed* upon it; there are more starved souls in the world than starved bodies. Take earnest *pains* with your religion; it is God's work, but He does not work for, or with, slothful servants.

46, 47. It is as though He said, 'Now you understand My telling you of My death and resurrection, which at the time seemed so dark.' 'Repentance and remission' go hand in hand. The publican smote upon his breast, saying, 'God be merciful to me a sinner,' *before* he went home pardoned, justified, at peace. The Gospel was to be preached in Christ's Name—the *only* Name under heaven whereby we can be saved; and their ministry was to *begin* at Jerusalem, where He had suffered! Jerusalem was the heart and metropolis of the then existing kingdom of God.

48. 'Ye are witnesses.' They said afterwards, 'We cannot but speak the things we saw and heard.' Probably Christ's words on this occasion ended here, and the succeeding words were uttered later.

49. 'I send'—in the present tense—'the promise of My Father'; *i.e.* the Holy Spirit. Mention several verses in which He is promised. In John xvi. 7, Christ speaks of Him as a gift so precious, that He would more than supply their loss of Himself. His own bodily presence could only be in one place at a time. When at Emmaus, He was not with the eleven. The Holy Spirit's influence encompasses God's children—

'Close as the air that wraps them round.'

One upward look can bring His help. Here, in crowded London, in the far west of America, in scattered ocean islands, in lonely vessels on the deep, Christ's faithful people are at this moment seeking and finding the Holy Spirit's help. 'Tarry ye.' Had any of the Apostles in over-zeal begun their ministry at once, how great their loss! but they obeyed—they waited—not knowing perhaps exactly what the promise of the

Father might be ; nor how many days, or weeks, or months, the waiting might last. Sitting still is harder than work to energetic natures ; but when He appoints it, 'waiting-time,' is far from unproductive. The way to make suspense and inaction bearable, is to remember with respect to all contingencies whatever, that,

'On the helm there rests a Hand
Other than mine,'*

'Clothed with power' : stamping with Divine authority their Apostolic office and teaching.

50. About forty days after His resurrection He took His last farewell of His disciples ; in the interim He had appeared on various occasions—to Thomas with the eleven ; again at the sea of Tiberias, where He wrought the miracle of the draught of fishes, and knowing that they needed food after their toil, had it all ready for them ; perhaps some attendant angel lighted that fire and prepared that meal. Again He met them on a mountain where He had appointed ; at another time 'He appeared to above five hundred brethren at once' (1 Cor. xv. 6). Later on He was seen by James, and that was followed by this final parting at Bethany—not at the village itself, but on the descent to it from Mount Olivet. Was it a final parting ? No, only a brief separation ; a few years of labour and suffering, a martyr's glorious death, and then, everlasting reunion, in the Home that He was all the while preparing for them. 'He lifted up His hands and blessed them' : those hands that had upheld Peter on the lake, had healed the blind, had touched the leper, now performed their last loving act on earth, uplifted in benediction. We can picture the pierced hands, but who can picture the Divine Face as the words of blessing fell ?

51. In the very act of blessing, He was 'carried up into heaven.' Perhaps He spoke the first words as He stood in their midst, and the closing words whilst slowly ascending. They *saw* Him rise, they were left in no suspense or doubt ;

* Alford.

He may have been visible for several minutes, till He entered the cloud, and then there was no need to linger on the bright ascent. Doubtless the everlasting doors received the King of Glory ere the up-gazing disciples left the spot. Acts i. 9-11 gives us the next event; two joyful attendant angels were sent with words of gentle dismissal and glad promise. Life is too short, too precious, too full of work and duty to be spent in even the holiest contemplation. Psa. xxiv. 7-10 is a rapturous ascension hymn.

52. Thought cannot follow that glorious company, nor imagination picture the Father's welcome to His only beloved Son in Whom He delighted; but we can return with the disciples to Jerusalem and share their joy. Why did they bear this parting so well, when the former one broke their hearts? Doubtless there were many reasons; the first parting shook their faith, and there are few greater miseries than shaken faith. At last they understood Him, and could triumph with their triumphant Lord.

53. In no other way could they have passed their waiting-time; laborious work lay close before them, but this hallowed interval was their own, and thus they spent it.

ST. JOHN.

PRELIMINARY REMARKS.

BEFORE St. John wrote, long years had passed, the other Apostles had entered their joyful rest, after a martyr's glorious death. It is thought St. Luke was slain in Bithynia; but in this and other instances the place is uncertain. St. James the Great, and St. James the Less, died at Jerusalem. St. Philip probably at Hierapolis; St. Thomas, it is thought, at Coromandel, in the East Indies. St. Barnabas at Salamis, St. Paul at Rome; but A.D. 95, in his ninety-fifth year, St. John lived on, and wrote the Apocalypse, and his Epistles and Gospel later still, dying in his hundredth year at Ephesus, about A.D. 100. Outliving the noble band of the Apostles, and all his generation, how often he must have pondered the saying current from the time of the Ascension that 'that disciple should not die!' Very likely when he reached man's full term of fourscore years, he wearied to be with Christ at Home; but had he been taken then, or even fifteen years later, how infinite the loss to the whole Church!

CHAPTER I.

AND now we come to this latest of all the Gospels, written by him who is so well-known to us as the beloved disciple, and whose special object was to supply information not given by the other Evangelists, and to record many of Christ's Divine utterances not found in the earlier Gospels; especially those relating to His Godhead.

1. This sublime opening verse takes our thoughts back to that past Eternity which no finite mind can comprehend.

The first verse in the Old Testament bears the same stamp. 'In the beginning was the Word,' who shall explain these words, referring, as they do, to One Who never had a beginning! We say that this earth came into existence millions of years ago, nor does Scripture contradict it, for though it only became *our* earth six thousand years ago, an unfathomable gulf of time probably separates the first and second verses of Gen. i. But, whatever date we assign it, the fact that it *had* a beginning tells that once there was *no* earth, nor the least trace of one. But there never was a period when the Eternal Son of God began to exist; comprehend it, we cannot, *believe* it, we must, and do; for no *created* existence, however exalted, could be equal with the Creator, since the maker of anything whatever must be greater than what he makes, or he could not have made it. Our whole salvation hangs on the all-atoning death of the God Man, Christ Jesus. Only St. John calls Christ 'the Word,' nor does he tell us *why* he uses this name. We have three distinct statements; 1st, 'He was in the beginning'; 2nd, 'He was with God,' separable from Him as being a distinct Person, yet one with Him in the Unity of the Godhead; 3rd, 'He was God,' *i.e.* His distinct Personality made Him none the less 'very God.'

2. Enforces verse 1.

3. 'All things were made,' etc. The heathens thought that matter, the earth for instance, was eternal. We might have thought the same, but for the Bible; only, having known it from childhood, we scarcely realise the errors into which we should have fallen without the blessed holy light of Scripture; may it shine ever more and more on our pathway through this dark, perplexing world.

4. His Life is our Light, the Light of them who 'dwell in darkness, and in the shadow of death.' All created light may go out, and leave us in utter gloom, the sun itself may be eclipsed, but the true Light shines for ever.

5. What makes the world dark when God made it 'very good'? The darkness here meant is of different kinds,

intellectual and moral, the understanding darkened, the will perverted, strong only for evil. Isa. xxiv. 11, describes it from another point of view, 'all joy is darkened,' our brightest joys have sorrow in them, or sad possibilities of loss or woe; 'apprehended,' understood.

6. How beautifully one Gospel supplements another! But for St. Luke, the Baptist would burst upon us as suddenly and almost as mysteriously as his great predecessor Elijah (1 Kings xvii. 1), whom in many points he resembled. Name them. The son of Zacharias is the first John of whom we read; the Old Testament name is Johanan or Jehohanan. John was 'sent from God,' to be Christ's forerunner. In another sense we too are 'sent' by Him to the sphere, the home, the work, assigned us. Believe that you were born to do some good work for God and man, and ask Him to fit you for it; He has a plan for each of you, find it out and adhere to it, not interweaving your own plans with it, but simply following His.

7. *How* did John seek to prepare men's minds for the Saviour's coming? He comes to prepared hearts, softened by a sense of sin and helplessness and need. Do *you* feel any such craving as only He can fill? Whether you are conscious of it or not, there is an unfathomable void in the human heart till Christ fills it with His loving presence. Open your hearts to Him Who is at this moment knocking, waiting for admission, and He will enter in and dwell with you, and you will be blessed indeed.

8. What a noble testimony to John that it should have been needful to tell us that he was not the light. He was not the harbinger of Christ in the sense in which the dawn is the harbinger of sunrise; for, in a certain degree, the dawn is *part* of the sunrise, since it indicates that the sun has already risen to places not remote. His mission was rather that of the herald announcing the approach of his king.

9. The true Light lighteth every one who receives it. The most awful power that we possess is the power of shutting out that glorious Light.

10. Here we have again three distinct facts ; He was *in* the world ; He made it ; it knew Him not. Do I know Him ?

11. Oh ! pathetic words ! His creatures, His possession, His own people, His own peculiar people, the Jews, received Him not ! They accepted Herod and Pilate—yes, Barabbas, too ! —but not Christ !

12. Whilst, as a nation, they rejected Him, many individuals received Him ; and ‘to them gave He the right to become children of God.’ God’s children not only ‘believe in His Name,’ and own Him as their Father, but live in loving obedience to Him.

13. Those that believe are God’s only ; they have a new and higher sonship than natural descent can bestow on earth’s mightiest monarch.

14. How glorious is this verse ! ‘Became flesh.’ Probably John is thus explicit because even in his time errors had crept in. The Docetæ taught that Christ was only *apparently* man. Well might the disciple whom Jesus loved, and who had leaned on His breast, oppose this most comfortless and chilling of heresies. ‘Beheld His glory’ ; not only His glorious Transfiguration and Ascension, but the glory of His perfect life, His love, and gentleness, and wisdom, and humility. Prove from Scripture the words ‘full of grace and truth.’

15. In bearing witness of Christ, John was ‘fulfilling his course,’ doing precisely the work for which he was born. It is high praise to say of any one, that he fulfilled his course ; and yet an unfulfilled course really means ‘Une vie manquée,’ if not quite ‘Une vie perdue’ : a life not absolutely lost, but one that has missed its aim. *Your* lives lie before you, and with God’s help you may make almost what you will of them, if you will it strongly enough, and especially if you dedicate them to God, and simply ask, ‘What shall I do, Lord ?’ John’s words mean, ‘My Successor is my Superior, for He was my Predecessor’ ; after me in official earthly manifestation, infinitely before me in dignity and in existence.

16. ‘His fulness.’ Who shall explain what that is ? Fulness

of grace, truth, love, wisdom, compassion, tenderness ; fulness of *everything* that we need. At the very best, our fulness is only that of a tiny rill after a shower ; His is a fathomless ocean. 'Grace for grace' ; the grace of a prayerful spirit brings more grace ; so, exercised faith grows.

17. The law tells us what to do, and what to avoid ; but it gives no strength for duty. Grace and truth, inward help and strength, come from Jesus only.

18. None can see God's Face and live ; we cannot even look upon the sun at noonday, how then should we look upon God ! 'In the bosom of the Father.' This proves the distinct Personality of Christ, and the close, most tender, love of the Father for the only begotten Son, Whom He gave up to death for *us*. 'Hath declared Him' : has described Him to us—but only in part ; more would not have been intelligible, for the human mind reaches such a little way into infinity. Sooner might a needle pierce the earth from pole to pole, than we 'by searching, find out God,' in the sense of understanding the mysteries of Godhead. Of all that Christ does tell us, few things are simpler and more comforting than this, 'The Father Himself *loveth* you.'

19. Rumours of John's strange, hard, lonely life and wonderful teaching, reached Jerusalem, and the Jews sent priests and Levites to ask the Baptist who he was.

20. Far from seizing the opportunity for self-exaltation, he repudiates any homage to himself.

21, 22. 'Art thou Elijah ?' Some of the prophecies respecting the Baptist seem to have led them to expect the re-appearance of Elijah. Mention one or two such prophecies. One can but approve their desire to learn who this new teacher was, and to carry back a satisfactory answer to those who had sent them.

23. He does not say, 'I am Messiah's forerunner,' he simply describes himself as a 'voice.' 'The voice of one crying in the wilderness' ; turning their attention from himself to his message ; 'Never mind the messenger, but heed what he says.'

24, 25. The Pharisees, tenacious of old rites, objected to John's baptism.

26-27. See Matt. iii. 11-12.

26. This must have been spoken after Christ's baptism and temptation. 'Whom ye know not.' How little do any of us know Him! To learn to know Him, and as we know Him to grow like Him, will be one of heaven's blessed occupations and never-ending joys. O Saviour, grant unto us more and more to 'know Thee now by faith.'

28. Bethabara or Bethany, not the Bethany near Jerusalem, but another place of the same name near the Jordan, in whose bright waters John baptized his disciples.

29. A more sublime utterance never fell from human lips. 'The Lamb of God,' spotless, holy Victim, offered for the sins of many. Not then was He 'the Lion of the tribe of Judah.' *That* is yet to come; He was the meek, unresisting, patient, suffering Lamb, yet strong to save, able to bear the sins of the whole world. Have *I* brought mine to Him? Sin that in true penitence, contrition, and sorrow is laid on Jesus, is pardoned, blotted out, never mentioned any more. The prodigal's father did not remind him of his baseness, the son remembered *that*; the father's words were those of eager, welcoming joy. So our Father welcomes His erring repentant children, whose sins are laid on the Sin-bearer. Only come to Him, and you will find it true.

30. How John delights in re-iterating this.

31. Christ and the Baptist seem to have chiefly lived apart, to avoid all appearance of collusion; the One at Nazareth, the other in the wilderness. But when, last of all the crowd, Christ came to be baptized, John would need no telling 'This is He.' To whom in the Old Testament was it said 'Arise . . . for this is he'?

32-34. This was the promised sign for which he was waiting. What a glorious sight in the eyes of one who comprehended it! John was soon to be shut up in prison, to be released only by death. His opportunities of seeing Christ would

henceforth be very few ; and one can well imagine the solace that the memory of the Spirit's descent would afford him in the weary prison hours. But for this, the thought, 'Why does not He Whose messenger I was, come or send to me in my sorrow ?' might have grown into a doubt of Christ Himself, and of his own mission as the forerunner. We see only one side of things, and that darkly. To us a dungeon seems indeed a dreary place ; but doubtless the holy angels count them happy who *endure*, and, in full view of heaven's glorious light, the prison darkness would seem momentary indeed. The dove is the emblem of purity and peace, and therefore no unfitting type of the blessed influences of the Spirit.

35-37. As John was in his accustomed place, he saw Jesus walking—not coming to him. To do this once, Bengelius says, was humility enough. The Baptist repeated to his two disciples who were with him, his glorious testimony to Christ, virtually telling them to follow Him, which they did henceforth. Unwilling as most of us are to lose our own specially faithful adherents, no thought of self tinged this holy man's character, and doubtless it was with almost unmingled satisfaction that he saw them go.

38. Gentle winning words ! the opening words of His ministry. They do not answer the question—it could not be fully answered at that moment ; for we seek great things when we seek Jesus. Their only reply is to ask a second question.

39. 'Come,' etc. A gracious invitation, at once accepted. The homeless Saviour, Who often had not where to lay His Head, must at that moment have had some lodging—some roof to shelter Him. They entered and abode with Him the rest of the day, from four p.m.

40. One of the two was Andrew, Simon Peter's elder brother ; the other was doubtless the Evangelist himself. Those swiftly passing hours won the two disciples' hearts for ever ; but John, though even the time of day dwelt in his memory, gives no record of the sacred words that passed. Reticence about himself is most characteristic of the disciple whom Jesus loved.

41. Andrew's first act was to bring his brother to Christ. Are *you* trying to bring a brother, a sister, a companion to Him? All who care for their own souls must care for the souls of others; no one escaping from a falling house would let another risk his life in it unwarned. 'We have found the Messiah'; glad tidings indeed to those whom the Baptist's teaching had prepared to look for Him.

42. 'He brought him unto Jesus.' What multitudes were brought to Christ a few years later through Peter's coming! Good goes on and multiplies to all eternity, and evil also. Take care of which *your* harvest consists! We are daily sowing the seeds of that harvest; and, as a man sows, he reaps. Jesus looked earnestly on him, seeing not only the simple fisherman, but the mighty preacher on the day of Pentecost—the faithful witness unto death. How little Peter knew what Christ would make of him! as little do *you* know for what blessedness of loving service here, and glad rest in heaven, He may prepare *you*, if you diligently seek Him.

43, 44. Philip, Andrew, and Peter were of Bethsaida—probably it was their birthplace; their residence seems to have been at Capernaum. 'Follow me.' Christ says this to each of you to-day. Follow Him whither? Whithersoever He leadeth. How can we follow an unseen Guide? Ah! if we 'know His voice' and obey it, we shall not miss Him on our life journey. Are *you* following Him? are *you*?

45. Philip finds Nathanael (Bartholomew). 'We have found Him,' etc. Blessed finding! 'The son of Joseph'; this was the Jewish mode of speech. Thus Simon is called Simon Barjonah; i.e. the son of Jonah.

46. 'Can any good thing,' etc. Fearing to make any mistake in so vital a matter, Nathanael asks the question, remembering the low repute of Nazareth. Philip wisely answers, 'Come and see.'

47. 'In whom is no guile'; he was artless and sincere. What is guile? How many instances have we of it in the book of Genesis?

48. Nathanael wondered that Jesus knew him ; and he must have wondered still more at what Christ's answer told him. Doubtless something in the words 'I saw thee,' told Nathanael that Christ had not only seen him, but heard the prayer he offered when hidden by the fig-tree.

49. What full conviction these noble words express !

50. Christ promises that his ready belief shall be rewarded by beholding 'greater things than these.'

51. Yet more was in store for him. The allusion here is to Jacob's ladder : desolate, friendless, and alone, the patriarch lay down, the ground his resting-place, a stone his pillow, his heart burdened with sorrow and remorse. God spoke to him — comforted him by this bright vision, showing how the holy angels are occupied in our concerns. And thus the stormy heart was hushed, and there was peace ; for his hard couch became 'the gate of heaven.'

CHAPTER II.

1. It would take two days to reach Galilee. This was doubtless the marriage of some relative of Mary's, who, but for the miracle, would probably not have been named on the occasion. It must surprise converts from Rome to find how rarely the Gospels mention her.

2. Jesus, being invited, went with His disciples. Happy bride and bridegroom to have such a Guest at their marriage ! John Baptist could hardly have been asked, and would have looked and felt out of place at a festivity of any kind ; but it was quite otherwise with Christ. Not only in the Temple and the synagogue, but wherever men might lawfully meet on any legitimate business, thither, if asked, He went. In humble cottages, on the wayside-well, in crowded streets, at rich men's tables, or in a fisher's boat on the lake, it seemed alike natural that He should be there. The reason of this is simple ; for He is the Living Example of a religion that comes home to men and women of all ranks and conditions, and in all kinds of Providential circumstances. John Baptist's was a grand

rugged life—a glorious one in its abnegation of self, and fidelity to duty; and men, returning from the wilderness, carried his teaching in their hearts, but his example would have been impossible to follow in the busy haunts of labour. We know nothing of the history of the newly-wedded pair—not even their names; but it was doubtless a happy marriage, since Christ was bidden to it, and went.

3. With a woman's quick eye, Mary observed the deficiency, though the ruler of the feast had not perceived it. We do not know what led her to expect a manifestation of Christ's glory on the occasion, as He had previously wrought no miracle; but her life, for thirty years, must have been one long expectancy, as she treasured and pondered many things not recorded for our learning.

4. 'Woman,' etc., implies no shadow of discourtesy, but quite the contrary. 'What have I to do with thee?' only conveys a gentle reproof for interference in His own peculiar province, with which no created being may intermeddle.

5. This was *not* going out of her province; it shows that her expectation was unshaken, and also that she was an honoured guest in the house, since she could give this order to the servants.

6. These water-pots were set for the washing, usual at feasts; they contained more than twenty gallons each.

7, 8. Christ directed all, but touched nothing, to show that there was no collusion. The servants little knew how well they were serving their master in so zealously filling these great vessels to the brim; so *our* Master sometimes turns our poor service to better account than we know at the time. The wine doubtless lasted for years, and may have been intended as a recompense for hospitable kindness. Picture the amazement of the servants as they drew out wine where they had poured in water, the bridegroom being unaware of any deficiency!

9, 10. How sensibly they acted in waiting a fitting moment to divulge the miracle! So excellent was the wine that the

ruler of the feast remonstrated with the bridegroom for keeping the best wine to the last, instead of bringing it out at the beginning, according to custom. When we drink of the river of bliss in heaven, each new draught will seem still sweeter than the last, so that we, too, shall feel, not that we are exhausting our store of joy, but that yet greater things await us.

11. 'Manifested His glory,' an expression which it would have been blasphemy to use of any apostolic miracle. In Gen. ii. and John ii. we have the same Divine sanction of marriage. What kind of marriages does God sanction?

12. His mother and His disciples had believed in Him before, but now sight is added to faith. This kindly miracle saved the young couple the deep mortification of a failure in hospitality and good management, on so important an occasion.

13. His stay was short at Capernaum, on account of the Passover.

14. The oxen and doves were sold in the Temple court, for the convenience of those who had to offer them in sacrifice; still, their being in that sacred place was most unseemly. 'The changers' exchanged Roman into Jewish money, in which the temple dues were paid.

15. Probably this scourge was made of the twisted rushes used to tie up the cattle. Not by this slight whip, but by some Divine power did He cast out so many whose interest it was to stay. It was the wrath of a King's Son, returning unexpectedly, and finding the palace occupied by intruders.

16. No earthly business must enter there; even the innocent, beautiful doves must be taken away. We too often take earthly business to God's house, not openly, but in the secret recesses of the heart; and 'as a man thinketh in his heart, so is he.'

17. 'Eat me up.' We speak of being devoured with eagerness, or anxiety. The zeal of God's servants waxes hot sometimes, and men call them enthusiasts for it. Look at that life-boat, breasting the rough waves on a rocky coast, and the brave sailors straining every nerve to save the drowning men

and women on some doomed ship. Do you call them enthusiasts? Or that gallant fireman mounting a frail ladder wreathed with flames, because some white agonized face looks out from an upper window? No, *this* is not enthusiasm, for life and limb are valuable; but that priceless jewel, the soul, has small value in their eyes; therefore they virtually say, 'anything you like in religion, except zeal.'

18. 'Asking a sign' seems to have been one of the special sins of the Jews at that time, a sin of unbelief.

19. Explain this; and also state in what sense all believers are temples.

20. Herod the Great began rebuilding the Temple in the eighteenth year of his reign; he was building God's Temple at the very time when he sought the life of God's Son, in the massacre of the babes of Bethlehem. Give some historical proof of the beauty of this building; and some particulars respecting the first and second Temple.

21. Explain His meaning.

22. Show that His enemies understood and remembered this far better than the loving, sorrowful disciples (Matt. xxvii. 62-6). Notice how the very precaution proved the fact of His resurrection, and made it known to the soldiers, who otherwise might never have heard of it.

23. 'Many believed,' some 'with the heart unto righteousness,' some only superficially, their understanding convinced, their hearts untouched. To which class do *you* belong?

24. Only of Christ can it be said that 'He knew all men.' We know no one, not even ourselves. Ah! often we know less of ourselves than of anybody. May we learn to know ourselves and to know Jesus! He 'did not trust Himself unto them,' *i.e.* had no familiar intercourse with them, such as He must have had in the memorable interview with John and Andrew in the previous chapter.

25. 'He knew,' etc. (see Jer. xvii. 9, 10.) We need no surer proof of Christ's Godhead than comparing these two passages.

Can we find comfort in the thought that Christ knows us? Yes, if we can humbly say, 'Lord, Thou knowest all things, Thou knowest that I love Thee'!

CHAPTER III.

1, 2. NICODEMUS, a member of the Sanhedrim, wisely came to the very Light of Life for the guidance and instruction he needed. It was the right beginning, and we can trace in his subsequent actions how he grew in grace and faith and courage. Contrast his coming to Jesus by night, for fear of the Jews, with his noble conduct before Pilate some years later. 'A teacher come from God' is an expression never used of a merely human messenger; the nearest approach to it is what is said of the Baptist, 'a man sent from God.' Explain the difference. Nicodemus is evidently afraid of committing himself, and therefore addresses Christ as a more than human 'teacher,' but not as the Messiah.

3. Christ does not begin by blaming him for his false shame, that brought him there under the cloak of night. Even when open sinners came, or were brought to Him, the first words that fell from His lips were not words of reproof, however well deserved. Christ goes at once to the very foundation of the matter, the new birth. The twice repeated 'verily' shows how solemn was the import of what was to follow. 'I say unto *thee*,' to thee individually, not to people in general, though it vitally concerns all. Take it home to each of *your* hearts, for Christ is speaking at this moment to *you*. 'Except a man,' etc. Nicodemus had probably led a comparatively blameless life; he had noble traits of character, judging by the courage that he showed (John vii. 50, 51), and the value of his offering after the Crucifixion, when the faith of the Apostles had turned to utter despair, and their love found no expression but sorrow and dismay. Yet this man, and all men, must be born again—born 'anew.' You know what it is to be born; yesterday the babe had no place upon earth, to-day it is the very centre of love and joy in the home; it has begun an

unending life ; the mother feels that an immortal being is cradled in her arms. Birth, therefore, is a great event, but the new birth is far more important still ; it ushers us into a world of which God is the centre, and thus all things become new, when Christ's love fills the once empty, selfish, unsatisfied heart ; ' Cannot see the kingdom,' etc., *i.e.*, can have no part in it.

4, 5. Though Nicodemus takes Him literally, Christ does not reprove his stupidity, but solemnly repeats His statement. 'Of water,' etc. ; baptism being the Divinely-appointed symbol.

6. 'That which is born of the flesh is flesh,' and there are, besides, innumerable points of resemblance between parents and children ; so 'that which is born of the Spirit,' partakes the spiritual nature, derived from the Father of spirits.

7. 'Ye must be born anew.' Christ alone, of all who were ever born into the world, needed no second birth.

8. 'The wind,' etc. ; breath and spirit are expressed both in Hebrew and Greek by the same word. Even yet we are only beginning to learn the laws that govern the winds, and though valuable recent discoveries have been made as to their force and direction, we know nothing of the changes of the gentle breezes that rise and fall many times a day, as God's wise Providence has ordered ; for stagnant air would be more injurious than stagnant water. So, with the Spirit's work upon the heart, we cannot explain it even to ourselves ; but if, indeed, He dwells in us, His influence is there, and gradually all around us take knowledge of us that we have been with Jesus. The indolent learn to work, the self-willed to obey ; the proud and irritable learn humility and gentleness, the selfish begin to care for others, for the whole man is born anew, born from above.

9, 10. From this point Nicodemus ceases to argue and humbly listens, anxious to understand the nature and means of the new birth. Christ's answer implies that he might from the Old Testament have known something of the nature of regeneration, as David did when he prayed, 'Create in me a

clean heart. O God ; renew,' etc. Mention similar passages from the prophets.

11. 'We speak that we do know.' Who knew it as He did ? 'that we have seen.' Paul saw wondrous sights when caught up into the third heaven, and John, in the isle of Patmos ; but no other human eyes have seen the blessed secrets of God's kingdom.

12. 'Earthly things' probably mean what we are intended to understand on earth, the new birth, and everything connected with Christian life and work. 'Heavenly things' may mean the higher and deeper teaching only granted to the redeemed in heaven. Ah ! how grand it will be to be *always* learning, going down into the very heart of things which here we see darkly, or not at all, and loving God more with each fresh insight gained !

13. Christ being in His Divine nature omnipresent, was in heaven even whilst on earth ; *we* can only be where our bodies are, till our immortal part lays aside its garment of mortality. Happy for us if 'in heart and mind we thither ascend, and with Him continually dwell' ! This we *may* do ; are we doing it ? If no heart-tendrils are reaching upwards now, what hope have we for our eternal future ?

14. See Num. xxi. 5-9. The serpent did its part once for all, and Hezekiah wisely destroyed it, calling it 'Nehushtan,' a piece of brass, when the people burned incense to it (2 Kings xviii. 4). They thought more of the serpent than of Him Whom it typified. So the cross of Christ did *its* part once for all in bearing Him Who bore the world's sin ; but it is the wondrous sacrifice thereon once offered that claims our heart's incense, and *that only*. As the serpent was 'lifted up' that the dying eyes might see it, so Christ was lifted up on the cross to draw our eyes and hearts to Him. A simple look saved the Israelites, in the very grasp of death, and in just the same way looking to Jesus is life to us who were before, not dying only, but 'dead, through trespasses and sins.' The 'wilderness' was near the land of Edom. The dreary journey was made

far drearier to the Israelites through never knowing from day to day whether they were to move or not, and the consequent lack of occupation. Work is so great a blessing, that its absence partly accounts for, though it does not justify, their fretting and perversity. Trying as their long discipline was, they justly incurred it (Num. xiv. 1-5). Faith in God's help would have averted it all.

15. 'Whosoever'; this word of wide meaning excludes none; it embraces *all* who believe, with no exception whatever.

16. 'God *so* loved,' etc. Who can fathom the depths of that word 'so'? We estimate love by the sacrifices that it is willing to make for the beloved one. Parental love makes the greatest sacrifices, and is justly accounted the deepest, since it literally 'endureth all things,' through good report or evil report, for it does not depend on the child's deserts or power of attracting regard. In this it resembles the love of the true Father, Who for us sinners made the unspeakable sacrifice of His only Son. 'The world' means the whole race of man; but it also means each one of *you* individually. Do believe that He *loves* you with a love compared with which even a mother's love is icy cold. Do not say, 'I am not the kind of girl that He would be likely to care for.' Granting that, the great fact remains, He *loves* you. I should not hesitate to say this if I stood alone with you on the deck of a burning ship, with only five minutes between us and *certain death*. 'Eternal life.' Blessed words! That true life won is won for ever; no decay, no death, no 'going out' for evermore.

17. God might have sent His Son into the world for the destruction of sinners, as He sent the Israelites to destroy the seven nations of Canaan. Mention them.

18. 'There is therefore now no condemnation,' etc. (Rom. viii. 1). 'Not judged' means here to be pardoned, saved, justified; 'judged already' means sentenced beforehand, by their own sin and unbelief, awaiting open condemnation at God's Tribunal. Unbelief is a terrible sin in itself, and leads to many others.

19. Darkness is the emblem of guilt, and ignorance, and error ; how great the sin of *loving* it ! O Light of Life, shine into the dark corners of our hearts !

20. 'Hateth the light.' See Prov. i. 29. 'Reproved' ; i.e. seen in their blackness.

21. 'Cometh to the light' ; i.e. he has nothing to hide, he is not afraid to have his conduct sifted, for he walks uprightly in his integrity.

22. Jesus perhaps purposely refrained from baptizing, knowing how, in later times, baptism would by many be taken as necessarily implying salvation ; He both sanctioned and enjoined it, though not Himself administering the holy rite. There is much instruction for us in what He did *not* do ; and the silence of Scripture on some points is full of meaning, if we are *thoughtful* students of it.

23. And now we return to the Baptist, to his last public acts and teaching, for his time was very short. Herod was planning his imprisonment, and was on the eve of accomplishing this wickedness. Ænon and Salim were on the west of Jordan, the opposite side to Bethabara, and farther south.

24. 'Not yet' ; touching words. It was to come ; that bitter experience of solitary captivity was the one hard lesson left for this holy man to learn. He had worked hard for his Master, now he must suffer for his faithfulness to duty. His bright reward never reached him here ; he was to be further prepared for it by a trial keen indeed to one of his active outdoor habits. We feel that God is preparing us for Himself by one kind of training and discipline, and then perhaps suddenly our life changes, and some quite different discipline begins, but the training goes on still ; and so by degrees we acquire what He loves to see in His children—a flexible will. What is that ? For the moment the Baptist was still free ; all this sorrow was 'not yet.' There was a little more work for him to do, a last noble testimony to utter, and then those eloquent lips were silent, except to God.

25. A dispute rather than a question.

26. Now came those who would have made mischief had John been less loyal and unselfish ; they said : ‘ He, to Whom you bore such generous testimony, is taking all men away from you.’ Did this grieve him ? did it strike one jarring chord in his faithful heart ? Listen.

27. Are these words in the sorrow key ? They mean, ‘ It is enough for me to do the work God gave me.’ In another sense there is deep truth in them. You have all some good gift, if not several. Remember that all talents are God-given ; *we* deserve no credit for the possession of them, for we did not endow ourselves with them. Then again, when life’s cup runs over with blessings, as it often does, especially to those who seek God early ; think, ‘ This too comes from Him ; I have my own Heavenly Father to thank for it all.’

28. He seems to say, ‘ This was exactly what I told you ; the very thing that I came for, the very thing that I desire.’ None of *us* would like to be left behind, or forsaken for new friends ; but this wonderful man soared far above such feelings, into a higher atmosphere than the mists of selfishness can reach.

29. The bride belongs to the bridegroom ; his friend rejoices in the bridegroom’s joy.

30. ‘ I must decrease.’ Is not this just the last thing that any of us desire to do ? He must increase, like the growing glory of the rising sun ; John must decrease, as the morning star which heralded the dawn, fades and is lost in the splendour of the perfect day. Beautiful as Venus is we do not miss her *then*.

31. See 1 Cor. xv. 47.

32. The truest witness in the world was He Whose message was least understood and believed, by the majority of those who heard it.

33. To set our seal to a document is to acknowledge it as ours, and as legally binding upon us ; to set our seal to a truth is to attest it by our own personal knowledge or experience. If you ask an aged believer what he knows

of God's faithfulness he will say : ' In life's sorest trials I have most fully realised how true God is ! I have been often disappointed in man, most of all in myself ; but in Him, never.' Truly His faithfulness floods the dark valley with celestial light. The testimony of the dying is strong and clear on this point. Mr. Wilson of Casterton, father of the founder of the Casterton Schools, near Kirkby Lonsdale, fell asleep in extreme old age, with these words on his lips, ' Surely goodness and mercy *have followed me* all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.' One who had spent eleven years in missionary work in Ceylon, said in his last illness, ' The valley of the shadow of death is not dark ; it is the most glorious place in which the poor pilgrim ever set his foot.' How glad a light kindled in his eyes, as he thus set his seal to God's truth !

34. To the prophets and apostles only a measure of the Spirit was granted, not so to Christ.

35. Not yet do we see all this, but the blessed time will come.

36. John's last solemn words ! ' The wrath of God abideth ' ; no passing cloud of anger, but one that for ever shuts out light and peace, except we repent. Hence the secret unhappiness of many an impenitent heart. Come just as you are to Jesus ; *cleave* to Him, and then you will be happy.

CHAPTER IV.

1. PROBABLY the Pharisees tried to excite envy in John. Vain attempt !

2. John and the disciples of Christ baptized with water. Christ bestowed the baptism of the Holy Spirit, of which the water was the outward symbol.

3. To avoid persecution, which at that early stage would have interfered with His work.

4. Samaria lay directly in His route ; but there was a deeper reason why He ' must needs pass through Samaria.' What was it ? How little we ponder the weary miles He trod on

His many journeys under an Eastern sky, on those sacred highways of Palestine ! May our feet never weary of walking on His errands ; but may we leave behind us 'foot-prints' for Jesus 'on the sands of Time' !

5. Sychar, the Shechem of the Old Testament. The situation of Shechem is one of surpassing beauty ; it is said that the view from the foot of the hills is like that from Heidelberg. There are various allusions to Shechem in Scriptura. See Gen. xxxiii. 18 ; also Joshua xxiv. 32. The brave energetic leader, under whom the Israelites conquered Canaan, rests from his warfare there, and Joseph also. This was the portion that Jacob gave to him when the old patriarch was dying (Gen. xlviii. 22) ; but his only personal share in it was a grave. How full of interest it is to trace the connection between detached Scripture notices of places or events ! Thoroughly to trace things out makes every subject interesting—that is worth studying at all. Superficial work is dull and almost useless.

6. Sychar is forty miles from Jerusalem ; Jacob's well is still there, though so many centuries have ebbed away. Mr. Calhoun, a modern European traveller, describes it as seventy-five feet deep, and having twelve feet of water. Jesus was 'wearied with His journey,' yet nothing would have induced Him to rest under some friendly oak at an earlier hour in the day. No ; He must reach the well, and meet the Samaritan woman. Under God's providence, events of the utmost importance often hinge on seeming trifles like this. A few minutes earlier or later, a few yards more or less of distance, have changed many a life-history ; therefore, in one sense, no event, however small, is really trivial. Very likely the solicitous disciples, at any rate the loving John, had marked His failing steps, and urged an earlier halt ; but no ! the place of rest 'must needs' be Jacob's well. This is perhaps the most *human* picture that we have of Christ. We *see* Him sitting on the well—we almost hear Him speak ; yet the words He spoke are altogether Divine.

7. 'There are plenty of fountains around Samaria, but the woman passes these—passes also a much larger, more convenient well, and comes to this one, where there was no public accommodation for drawing water. Perhaps a peculiar value was attached to this ancient well.* At all events, hither she came. Jesus opens the conversation with a request.

8. The absence of the disciples gave fuller opportunity for close personal conversation.

9. She neither refuses nor grants the request. We see her standing, vessel in hand, growing by degrees so absorbed and lost in astonishment, that she seems to have forgotten to draw any water at all—even for Him. He gave her of His fulness, but she did not give Him the cup of cold water that He asked; yet she gave Him far, far more—her *heart*. It was an abomination to a Jew to have any dealings with a Samaritan; hence the significance of the Samaritan leper being the only grateful one, and of the good Samaritan's kindness to the wounded Jew. The Samaritans were originally an intermixture of the ten tribes with Gentiles. See 2 Kings xvii. Shalmaneser, King of Assyria, carried away numbers of the people; but many must have been left. What became of the lost ten tribes is a problem to this day.

10. 'The gift of God' is the Holy Spirit. Sometimes Christ Himself is the 'gift.' 'If thou knewest Who it is.' Far indeed was she from knowing *that*! He sat on the well, as travellers innumerable must have done, weary, toil-worn, the 'Meek Christ Jesus.' But she had never seen Him—never heard that precious Name: and, at first, her mind was filled, not with awe, or love or adoration, but with simple surprise at His words. Still, Jesus was the Teacher; and her feelings changed, deepened, softened every moment. 'He would have given thee': a gentle reproof to her for not giving Him the draught He asked. 'Living water': water from the river of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God. Mention texts referring to this living stream.

* See Robinson's 'Biblical Researches,' vol. iii. pp. 107-113.

11. How literally she takes His meaning ! pointing out the depth of the well, and that He had nothing to draw with, forgetting how easily she could have lent Him her own pitcher, especially to draw water for herself. The question whence the living water was to come, was a natural one ; the understanding and the heart have each their part in conversion. In her case she must comprehend before she could feel ; in most cases the heart is awakened first, and sets the understanding to work on the subject, which is mysteriously moving the feelings and affections. Queen Candace's officer, the eunuch, was moved by his heart to study Isaiah ; but he altogether failed to comprehend it, till Philip joined him. All true religious teaching appeals to the heart, the understanding, and the conscience, sometimes in one order of time, sometimes in another. In this woman's case Christ begins with her understanding, in verse 10 ; then, in verses 13 and 14, He appeals to her heart—her own experience ; in verse 16 begins the appeal to her conscience.

12. Evidently she began to perceive some mysterious dignity about this 'Wayfarer.' Probably 'our father Jacob' was one of the greatest names she knew. When the Jews prospered, the Samaritans claimed kindred with them—looked upon them as estranged undoubtedly, yet kinsmen still. When misfortune befell them, Josephus says they renounced the connection. How like the world !

13. This is true in every sense ; we shall thirst again to-morrow, however refreshing the brook from which we drank to-day. It is true of all earth's perishable satisfactions, even those of the intellect and the affections ; we want more, more always. Yesterday's knowledge does not content us to-day ; it only opened a new crevice, through which we peer into the infinity beyond. So the deep human love of those whom God has given us can only meet our needs by being a living brook in the way—not a cistern—full at one season, dry at another.

14. 'The water that I shall give him' ; *i.e.* spiritual life and Divine influences. 'Shall never thirst,' except for more of

this soul-satisfying gift; and this thirst is 'blessed' (Matt. v. 6); and, as regards earthly longings, life's fevered thirst will in a great degree cease. Surely it had ceased with St. Paul, when he could say, 'I have learned, in *whatsoever* state I am, therein to be content.' There are few things more sad to observe than the expression on the countenances of people whom you meet, for instance, in travelling, when the mask worn in society is off. What traces of unrest, of unsatisfied craving, one sees in faces that will never again look young! Whence comes this unrest? Why is it stamped on some faces and not on all? Notice the repetition, 'the water that I shall *give* him'—an unpurchasable gift. '*In* him,' carried about with him, not left behind, as we must leave life's pleasant Elms when God lifts the guiding pillar. 'A well,' rather a 'fountain,' whose cool delicious waters, bubbling up continually, carry our thoughts to the deep sources whence they rise. If these draughts so refresh and bless us, what will it be to drink of the full river of bliss in heaven! Bengelius says, 'Thither may I arrive'; truly my heart adds, 'Amen.'

15. How entirely had she misunderstood Him! *We* need not marvel if *our* teaching often fails, since she had for the time the world's great Teacher all to herself, and yet comprehended nothing till He changed His mode of appeal; her intellect did not respond—her conscience *shall*.

16. His words now go straight to the mark—probe to the quick. His was no bow drawn at a venture; He knew all the hidden secrets of her history; so He knows ours to the minutest detail.

17, 18. With no vain attempt to cover the sin, she owns the truth at once. Then, in a few brief words, He tells her the story of her own life, full of trouble and disgrace: five husbands dying, or divorcing her, and her present sin crowning all the rest of her misery. This wondrous insight into her history went direct through her conscience to her heart. 'This hast thou said truly.' He gives her credit for the truthfulness, which may have been her one remaining virtue; and in dealing

with human beings we should let them see that we appreciate everything that is good and hopeful in them. A sweeping condemnation of another harms both parties, especially the reprover.

19. Perceiving Him to be 'a prophet,' and willing perhaps to turn the conversation from her own story, which could so little bear His scrutiny, she ingeniously asks an irrelevant question. She was moved and shaken, but does not yet ask, 'Sir, what must I do to be saved?' The prodigal endured a great deal before he could bring himself to say, 'I will arise, and go to my father.' Our proud hearts are slow to submit to thorough humiliation.

20. 'This mountain': Gerizim, near Sychar (Deut. xxvii. 12). Sanballat, the Horonite, Governor of the Samaritans, and Nehemiah's enemy, had built a temple on Mount Gerizim; the law of Moses contemplated having the sacrifices and the great feasts at one place only. Joshua xxii., a chapter of deep interest, throws much light on this point, and shows how noble a race the Jews had become under Joshua. It is a blessing when a nation, or even a family, has a devout sagacious head.

21. Nine out of ten human instructors would have thought, 'My time is too precious to be wasted in turning from the point,' and would have reproved her; but this matchless Teacher patiently follows her lead, answers her questions, and pours light into her mind as to the spirituality of true worship. Most likely the reproof would have chilled her; she would have drawn the water she came for and gone away, not to bring back many to Jesus, but to return no more, lost for ever. Both places where they worshipped were to be laid waste, the worship there offered not being 'in spirit and in truth.' Jerusalem is now under Mahometan rule, and Islamism strongly prohibits idols; therefore from that pollution, at least, the fallen city, still so beautiful in its surroundings, is kept free. On the other hand, the Mahometans most expressly refuse to accept the *Fatherhood* of God. He is the fatalist's God, the Predestinator, not the Father!

22. Like the Athenians, who erected an altar to 'the unknown God'—pathetic words! used by St. Paul, to teach them Who that unknown God was, Whose Divine interposition they could not assign to any known deity. Do *we* know what we worship? I do not mean comprehension, for no archangel can fully comprehend Him; but are our conceptions of Him Scriptural? We must believe in His intense hatred of sin, and also in His wonderful love for sinful man. Lord, teach us to know Thee by faith now—in glorious fruition hereafter. 'Salvation is from the Jews.' Christ Himself and His apostles were Jews, and from them the Gospel came to us.

23. The new dispensation had just begun; she was even now learning what true worship is. 'Such doth the Father seek.' Christ was about His Father's business in 'seeking' that lost one.

24. 'God is a Spirit.' How little the Greeks and Romans knew of this great truth! Their gods had all human passions intensified; few of them would have been tolerated long as emperors or rulers. The Great Spirit, worshipped by the poor Red Indian, comes nearer to the truth than the gods of polished Athens and imperial Rome, who were only exaggerated men—more powerful, but not less vile. How should they form any conception of a *holy* God? He is 'a Spirit'; let us try to take in that glorious thought. We know that our spirits are our noblest, our immortal part, that they are as sparks thrown out from Him Who is expressly called 'the Father of spirits.' How it must grieve Him when we sin! Oh! to be pure in heart!

25. The Samaritans acknowledged the Pentateuch, and therefore expected the Messiah. Christ had decided her question (verse 20) in favour of the Jews, so she does not press that point, but leaves it till Messiah's advent should settle all things (Deut. xviii. 15).

26. To the Jews Christ rarely said anything so plain as this; to the last He rather *proved* than *told* it. They had taken the promises of the glorious second advent as applying to His first

coming in great humility, and therefore few perhaps would have believed Him had He spoken plainly ; even if they had, the desire to make Him a king would have absorbed the thoughts of many.

27. The disciples neither asked the Master why He talked with her, nor the woman what she sought ; doubtless her rapt, earnest face told what she had *found*. What was it ? One word tells it—‘ Salvation.’

28. Now the sacred interview was over ; it was too sacred to be continued in the presence of the disciples. Do *you* know what it is to be alone with Jesus ? to pour your cares and temptations into His ear—to tell Him, as far as you can, all that is in your heart ? If so, you *know Jesus*, and are well known of Him. How natural it was for her to leave her water-pot ; in the Divine revelation made to her she lost sight of her errand at the well, of earthly things altogether, for the living water was springing up in her soul.

29. She speaks only of what He had told her respecting herself, not of what He had revealed to her ; and this was wise, considering her previous history, and the small esteem in which she was held. ‘ Come, see.’ Come at once while He sits on the well ; an hour hence He may be gone, we know not whither. Come and see ; judge for yourselves Who He is. My very heart says to all of you this day, ‘ Come and see.’ In His dear Name I bid you come, and He will bid you welcome.

30. How prompt their obedience ! These poor ignorant Samaritans were not, like the Jews, slow of heart to believe. The unpromising often turn to Jesus sooner and more readily than those who are satisfied with themselves, and who, when they confess in church that they are ‘ miserable offenders,’ are not for a moment thinking of their own sins, but calmly acknowledging those of their fellow-worshippers. Ah ! how much we *all* need God’s pardoning mercy !

31. While the woman was gone on her blessed, loving errand, the disciples had prepared the much-needed food, and they entreat Him to partake it.

32. His 'meat' had been the gaining this lost woman's soul. In Scripture, anything that supports, refreshes, satisfies, is called our meat or drink.

33. How natural a question! and how natural their putting it to each other, not to Him, though only He could answer it!

34. 'My meat,' etc. In doing God's will He found refreshment, sustenance, and strength; so, too, shall we, and thus go on 'from strength to strength.' All this time He had not received even the draught of water, whilst giving out of His fulness to this forlorn one; spending His condescension, wisdom, compassion, patience, on one poor ignorant soul; and thus to lay Himself out for her had been 'meat' to Him. 'Accomplish His work.' We must not look for rest or reward till it is accomplished. If we weary of it, though life will one day be finished, its work will remain hopelessly incomplete for ever, a flawed, tangled web, that will perplex the lives of those that come after us.

35. In Palestine there are four months between seed-time and harvest; in other countries, generally more. This verse refers to the great harvest and ingathering of souls, especially after the day of Pentecost.

36. Much has to be done ere the farmer sees his ripe wheat waving in the soft breezes, looks at his weather-glass, and says to his labourers, 'We will reap this field to-morrow.' Then the precious wheat is safely garnered where no storm can ever crush it down; there is a joyful feast for the reapers, a glad song of 'harvest home.' But where would have been the song, the feast, the harvest, without the sharp cutting of the ploughshare, the faithful sowing of the seed? Apply this to ourselves; how much culture *we* need, ere the Lord of the harvest says to His reaper, Death, 'That soul is ripe for heaven'! Then another, blessed one is at rest for evermore from all the storms of Time, and in due season all who ever helped us onward 'rejoice together.' Would not *you* like to help to set *such* joy-bells ringing?

37. How true this is! The sower could have no pleasure in

his work were there no reaper to follow in his track. *Apparently* the chief *success* is the reaper's ; but, humanly speaking, his success is decided, or his failure ensured, many months beforehand. Sow bountifully, and God gives the increase. Do not grow discouraged when trying to do good to others ; have 'long patience' with them.

38. The prophets, and more recently the Baptist, had sown the seed which Christ and His Apostles were to reap ; whilst they in their turn, and chiefly the Divine Sower Himself, planted seeds for every spiritual harvest that has been garnered for eighteen centuries. Notice the beautiful words, '*I sent you.*' This was the secret of their success. Hezekiah's history is a remarkable illustration of sowing and reaping, and of the Divine and the human side of earthly affairs. See 2 Kings xx. Hezekiah was sick ; God sent the sickness, and the prophet to announce his death. Now comes the human side : Hezekiah prays for life with a passionate earnestness wonderful in so good a man, who might have been glad to exchange his palace for his Father's Home. God interposes immediately. The prayer has reached heaven, and been granted before Isaiah has had time to cross the palace courts. He is sent back to tell the king that he shall live fifteen years, and shall recover so rapidly that on the third day he should go up to the house of the Lord. Now for the human side : unwilling to take this on trust, even for three days, he unbelievably asks a sign ; God works an astonishing miracle to grant it. That miracle brings messengers from the King of Babylon to see the man for whom such a marvel had been wrought. Hezekiah boastfully displays his treasures, exciting in the Babylonians the desire to possess them, and Isaiah comes a third time, to foretell the ruin that should ensue after Hezekiah's death. Surely he must often have wished that he had been *willing* to die ! What a history of sowing and reaping it is ! He sowed prayer, he reaped an answer ; he sowed a seed of unbelief—what a disastrous harvest came of it ! '*Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.*'

39. Blessed ingathering ! They believed, not because of any miracle, but because of the supernatural knowledge He had displayed. This poor woman might have feared that *her* word would go for nothing ; but she harboured no such coward thought ; she did 'what she could,' and how glorious was the result !

40. Those must have been glad days to Christ, and most blessed ones to the Samaritans, remembered by numbers of them in Paradise. The name of Sychar must be graven on their hearts.

41. It is a rare instance of Christ's ministry producing an awakening on a wide scale. We should have expected marvels from it ; but the work was deep rather than wide. Had the Jews received Him as the Samaritans of Sychar did, none would have been found to crucify Him.

42. Now they knew Him for themselves, by their own personal knowledge. 'The Saviour of the world,' not merely 'the Saviour of the Jews.'

43, 44. We may wonder that He went thither apparently because He did not expect to be well received ; but He did not go into that *part* of Galilee which was His own country, viz. Nazareth. He went to Cana of Galilee, a place south-west of Capernaum, and north of Nazareth.

45. The Galilæans had seen Christ's miracles and His cleansing of the Temple ; so that their minds were prepared to receive Him. It was their practice and duty to go up to Jerusalem for the stated feasts, and in so doing they found a blessing beyond price.

46. This nobleman, or king's officer, is supposed to have been Chuza, Herod's steward, whose wife Joanna ministered to our Lord, probably in consequence of the miracle wrought on her son. Manaen, mentioned Acts xiii. 1, belonged to the same class or rank. This nobleman's son was sick ; sickness and sorrow are the heritage of all ranks, of all sorts and conditions of men. A nation's prayers seemed to be the means of saving the Prince of Wales in 1872 ; but his father's precious life, and that of the beloved Princess Charlotte in 1817, closed

quite suddenly, ere danger was publicly known. When our time comes, die we must ; vain would be the cry, ' O death, spare me a little season ! I have so much to do, so much to *undo* !'

47. Hard as it was to leave the dying son of his heart's love, he went himself ; like the Shunamite who laid her dead boy, her only one, on the prophet's bed, and went to fetch him. Chuza's son still lived, but the wings of the angel of death were hovering over him ; and the father must leave him under their shadow, or the Great Healer could not, he thought, come in time, for he was 'at the point of death.' Ah ! we must each come to that point, and *beyond* it. Are we prepared for what lies beyond ?

48. This was said to the Galilæans as much as to the father.

49, 50. ' Sir, come down ere my child die ' ; we can fancy the repressed quiver of agony in his voice as he spoke. How true to nature are his words ; the strong affections that God has implanted in us are the same in every age. All else changes : laws, customs, languages, the boundaries of empires, literature, tone of thought—what alterations in all these ! but parental love is what it was in Time's early dawn. This sorrowing father was in deep earnest, and Christ healed his son at once, giving the troubled heart faith to rely on His bare word. Had he still insisted, Christ would doubtless have accompanied him ; but the boy must have had another day's suffering, from which the father's faith saved him. We never know what we lose through unbelief. His going showed even greater faith than his coming, in this exceptional case ; for the boy's one last solitary chance lay in Christ's interposition—other hope there was none. Christ's word was enough to prevent all doubt or misgiving. Is it enough for *us* too ? I mean, do we *realise* how all-sufficing it is ?

51. What a thrilling moment when he recognised his servants in the distance ! Not a word of greeting passes till he hears the blessed tidings.

52, 53. Asking at what hour the cure took place, he learns,

as he doubtless expected, that, as Christ spoke, the fever left him. The father had experienced three differing forms of faith: 1st, the partial faith which looked for cure if Christ were present ere it was too late; 2nd, the strong faith in His power, present or absent; 3rd, the triumphant faith crowned by fulfilment. 'His whole house.' Oh! blessed family, where all were partakers of the true and living faith!

54. This was not Christ's second miracle, for He had wrought many since He turned the water into wine; but His second miracle in Cana of Galilee. What an encouragement it affords to believing prayer! and it is effectual still. Years ago a young clergyman in Norfolk, greatly beloved in his parish, lay dying; his medical attendants said that he could not possibly survive the night. His parishioners agreed to hold a prayer-meeting at once, and in that night a change took place; he recovered and has lived ever since amidst those who prayed him back to life. I have known similar and more recent instances of the power of united prayer in dangerous illness—indeed I have *felt* as well as known it. In a different way we are often shown how God answers prayer even for temporal things. In my girlhood I knew a very poor curate, who had a large family of young children; one day his wife told him that there was no money, no food in the house, nothing whatever for the next meal. In very earnest prayer they took their need to God. Presently the postman brought what used to be called a double letter, of which the postage was two shillings; the charge was always double if there were even the thinnest enclosure. The curate declined to take it, giving the true reason. But the postman said, 'I will trust you for the money, sir; I am nearly sure it contains a bank-note.' When opened, it was a blank sheet of paper, and a five-pound note: only He Who feeds the ravens, and Who has said, '*Before they call I will answer,*' knew whence that blessed help came. Many are prone to ascribe God's interpositions to any second cause rather than to prayer; and possibly some of you are thinking that, as the letter was posted on the previous day,

prayer did not bring it. Ah ! do you think that prayer was the *first* that those parents, who for many a day had seen the terrible 'wolf at the door,' offered for bread for their little children ? Moreover God's bounty reached them in other ways ; the living fell vacant, the curate was appointed to it, and those dark days passed, never to return.

CHAPTER V.

1. If this feast was the Passover, a year must have elapsed since the events recorded in Chapter IV., a year during which He made a general circuit in Galilee, and probably preached the Sermon on the Mount.

2. Travellers differ about this pool of Siloam ; but there is still a remarkable fountain there, the waters of which rise and gurggle strangely at uncertain intervals. Bethesda means the house of mercy.

3. There they lay, each with his own burden of pain and infirmity ; each consumed with one intense longing to be the first to step into the pool. How agonizing the repeated disappointments !

4. This is an apt illustration of the Divine and human side of things. God sent the angel, and gave the healing power to the water, but the sufferer must step in or remain uncured ; he must do it instantly too, or others would step in before him. This pool differed altogether from other medicinal springs ; they are good for certain diseases only ; *that* healed any disease whatever, and instantaneously, but it retained its healing virtue only long enough for one person's cure, and was entirely dependent on the angel's visit. Thank God for that cleansing Fountain, which is ever open, and free to all !

5. Probably he was a paralytic, and the most helpless and pitiable of all, therefore the one selected. How many changes we pass through in less than half that time ! but to this sorrowful life no spring-time of hope ever came, save that forlorn one of possible healing in Siloam. There he lay still, disappointed ever, and each disappointment more bitter than the last.

6. 'A long time in that case'; a pitiable case indeed. Jesus knew it; His tender eye had watched the sufferer through all those weary, desolate years, little as the paralytic knew of Him. 'Wouldest thou be made whole?' If Christ asked *you* this, what would be your answer, spoken truthfully before the Searcher of hearts? Would it be, 'Yes, Lord; but not to-day'? Christ asked in order to elicit the sufferer's account of himself, and to encourage a dawning hope of cure.

7. How touching is this! Others lying there had, it may be, a father, a brother, a friend, to help them at times; but no man cared for *him*; while he slowly and painfully dragged himself to the brink, another stepped in before him, and the chance was gone! Why, then, did he still wait there? He always *had* failed, most likely he always would; why endure any longer the long sore sickness of ever disappointed hope? He stayed simply because it was his last solitary chance, and, hopeless as it was, he would not throw it away. What an example of patient, submissive waiting, amidst every possible discouragement! What a rebuke to us who grow disheartened when our prayers seem unanswered, our efforts vain!

8, 9. This miracle is wrought by a command. 'Arise, take up,' etc. The man might have argued the point, have pleaded utter inability; but he simply obeyed, showing a wisdom beyond all argument, and took up his bed, some light couch which could be slung over his shoulders, and walked. Divine strength accompanied human effort, for Christ's biddings are enablings!

10. Not a word of congratulation or kindly sympathy in his deep joy. What was it to them?

11. Evidently he did not know that Jesus had healed him; perhaps he had never heard that blessed Name.

12. They did not ask Who healed him; that would have been acknowledging the reality of the miracle; they, doubtless, well knew that it was Jesus, and sought to charge Him with violating the Sabbath. The most faulty are ever the most fault-finding.

13. Christ had gone into the crowd to perform this one act

of mercy, and departed immediately, before there was time for the man to ask, 'Sir, Who art Thou?'

14. Going to the Temple brought him face to face with Christ once more. How sharply his conscience must have pricked him when he heard the words, 'Sin no more.' This points to Christ's full knowledge of the past sins that thirty-eight years before had caused the paralysis. The records of consciences seem often written in invisible ink, but *there they are*, indelibly; sometimes one part is brought out, and sometimes another. What awful revelations will be made on the great day of doom! Turn to Jesus *now*, while He is passing by, and the blood shed on Calvary will for ever blot out your sins and mine. *Then* it will be too late. 'A worse thing. Yes, there are worse things by far than a life full of pain and weariness, unrest and disappointment, such as this man's must have been. May God deliver *us* from the dire woe of unprepared death and everlasting destruction!'

15. Having learnt that Jesus was the Healer, he returns to tell the Jews, little thinking how unwelcome his grateful testimony would be.

16. How different from the Samaritans, who sought Him gladly when told of Him. The Jews rejoiced to have a handle against Him, for a supposed breach of the Sabbath, and were more eager to kill Him than before.

17. 'My Father.' Christ here speaks as only the Father's well-beloved Son can speak. 'Worketh,' *i.e.* continually. 'The Keeper of Israel'—how beautiful the Name!—'neither slumbers nor sleeps.' Were there but once in a century a moment in which His untiring guardianship was suspended, what advantage Satan and his emissaries would take of it! A little tottering child may, if left to itself for an instant, meet with an injury that may blight all its after life; and no helpless babe so needs its mother as we need *our* Keeper. Others may in part replace the mother, but who could replace *Him*? Truly, 'He worketh' still, though His path is in the deep waters, where we cannot trace it.

18. For once they grasped His full meaning, and thoroughly understood that He claimed a special Sonship—an equality with God. Prove this truth from Scripture. See Zech. xiii. 7.

19. 'The Son can do,' etc. : *i.e.* He does nothing apart from the Father ; has no separate interest.

20. 'The Father loveth the Son.' No archangel can fathom the depth of that love ! Yet He *so* loved us—lost, helpless sinners—that for our sakes He not only gave up that Son to die, but in one awful hour so dealt with Him, that He uttered the agonized cry, 'My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me ? Shall this love, this anguish, be nothing to you ? God forbid.

21, 22. Life and judgment have been called God's regalia. 'Raising up' and 'quickeneth' are two stages of the same act. In the vision of dry bones (Ezek. xxxvii. 1-14) there were several stages ; a noise, a shaking, after that the bones were fitted into their sockets, then the flesh covered the skeleton, but there was no breath in the motionless forms till God said, 'Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain that they may live.' Then they stood up, an exceeding great army. 'Quickeneth' always means 'giveth life' ; hence we read of 'the quick and the dead.' There is a spiritual resurrection from the death of sin, and a spiritual quickening by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. May He dwell in us, and abide with us for ever. 'God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ.' 'We believe that Thou shalt come to be our Judge.' How exquisitely beautiful and touching are the words that follow in the *Te Deum*, 'We therefore pray Thee help Thy servants, whom Thou hast redeemed with Thy most precious blood' ! Now is the time to plead this ; it will be all too late when He comes in the majesty of the Second Advent. Calvary will be a memory of hopeless anguish to those who stand forlorn, and wretched, and undone, at the left hand. Do not let that be *your* place, or *yours*.

23. Pliny, writing to Trajan, describes the early Christians as meeting to sing hymns to Christ as God. The Father will accept no homage which is not equally offered to the Son.

24. What is it to have eternal life ? This mortal life is brief, uncertain, transitory ; to-day we are alive, perhaps in full health and vigour, and to-morrow any one of us may be in the eternal world. If we attain the true life, it will be ours in inalienable possession. 'The everlasting Father,' literally translated, is 'the Father of enduring life.' Where shall I spend that endless life ? Notice the present possession of it, 'he that believeth *hath* it' ; but the full enjoyment is to come.

25. This refers to the awakening of dead souls under Christ's ministry, and that of His Apostles. How sublime is the expression, 'Hear the voice of the Son of God' ! How clear the testimony to His Divinity !

26. 'Hath life in Himself' : life of His own ; communicable in a measure to us. The sun and the fixed stars are a type of this ; they have light of their own, while the earth and the planets shine by light not their own, but lent to them. In *himself* the Christian has simply nothing ; he draws life, and light, and joy, and holiness, and every good gift from God only. Do believe this ; for to look for anything good in ourselves, and of our own, will be a very disappointing search.

27. Christ will not only judge, but execute His sentence ; not like an earthly judge, who speaks the words of doom, and then the prisoner passes out of his presence, and they meet no more till both stand at a higher Tribunal. Christ Himself will, in flaming fire, take vengeance, etc. (2. Thess. i. 8).

28, 29. What a grand scene here opens ! and how naturally these verses follow the preceding one ! In verse 25, Christ says of the resurrection of dead souls, 'The hour cometh, and *now is*' ; but there is no present tense *here*. The man who died but an hour ago is deaf to the voices that were dearest to him to the last ; his little child's pitiful cry does not move him for a moment, though the wondrous mechanism of the ear is as perfect as when he was alive. Yet, in some inconceivable way, those who have been dust for ages shall 'hear the voice of the Son of God, and shall come forth' ; in innumerable cases, oh ! how reluctantly ! Those who despised the

call of mercy *must* obey the call of judgment. What an awful awakening, to meet the despairing looks of those whom they led into sin! May we ponder the solemn words of Dan. xii. 2.

30. Christ here repeats with greater fulness what He had said in verse 19.

31. *i.e.* 'If I bear witness of Myself as having any separate interest from the Father.'

32. The Holy Spirit bore witness of Him before His birth (Luke i. 41-44), and after His baptism (Luke iii. 22).

33. For the appropriateness of the word 'sent,' see John i. 19. There have been many true men, and even true prophets, but only Christ Himself is 'the Truth.'

34. 'Receive not'; *i.e.* 'need not.' Christ personally needed John's testimony as little as the sun needs the light of the remotest star; but to the Jews his testimony was of much importance if it led them to Christ. He refers to it to aid their weak faith, not to strengthen His own position.

35. Whilst John's ministry lasted, he was the great light of his day; he completed the old dispensation, and introduced the new, standing in solitary rugged grandeur on that narrow plank that bridged the two. He was born for that one work, and that one moment of Time in the world's history. Does *our* taper-light burn brightly? We should each be very careful of it—as careful as the trusty keeper of a light-house, who would suffer anything rather than let his light go out; for, if he did, ships depending upon it would go to destruction. He little knows *who* is looking to his light for guidance; and *we* seldom know how many people may be shaping their lives by ours. John was a noble light-bearer, Christ is '*the Light*'; and when He appeared, the Baptist's light was hidden in Herod's gloomy dungeon. The Jews were 'willing for a season' to follow John, till they saw that he was pointing to One Whom they were not prepared to accept; and that he required the forsaking of sins which they did not choose to renounce. Then they said, even of their favourite John Baptist, 'he hath a devil' (Luke vii. 32).

36. Stronger, more decisive testimony. Christ here refers, not simply to the miracles, but to the inherent, not derived, power by which He wrought. He refers to them again and again. See also Acts ii. 22, in which St. Peter appeals to them. What is the difference between inherent and derived power ?

37. At least four times there came 'a voice' from Heaven ; probably the first of these (Luke i. 41-44) was a spiritual rather than an audible manifestation. At His baptism, His transfiguration, and again in John xii. 28, it was *heard*.

38. It is a blessed thing when God's word speaks to us ; it is more blessed when we have it *abiding* in us ; those who are most advanced in the divine life carry most of this hidden treasure in their hearts.

39. Hundreds read the Bible, but few really 'search' it. Homer uses the word to describe the anxious quest of a lioness robbed of her young, and tracking the robber's footsteps till she finds them ; 'read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest' God's holy word. Pause in your reading to say, 'Lord, open Thou mine eyes, that I may see the wondrous things that are written in Thy book.' 'Let Thy light shine upon me as I read.' If a chapter does not seem to *speak* to you, to have any message for you, it is generally because you have not been *searching* it. You have not read it in a prayerful spirit, but with your mind's eyes partly shut, or even looking another way ; or your heart has been full of something else. You do not expect to accomplish any secular work without pains ; but some of you think that religion will in some way come of itself, and then you tell me, 'Somehow, I do not get on.' Ah ! indeed, how should you ? Truly it comes from God, but how can they *find* who never *seek* ? The Old Testament Scriptures are full of Christ ; try to search out some of the countless passages that speak of Him.

40. 'Ye will not come to Me,' sad pathetic words ; *I would*, but ye would not. (Matt. xxiii. 37). The most awful power that we possess is that of refusing salvation. Do believe that

there is no barrier on God's side if we are willing to 'arise and go to Him.' The returning prodigal found no closed door in his father's house or heart; but loving arms embraced him, and an exulting voice said, 'Bring forth the best robe and put it on him'; and *you* are dear to God with a love transcending even this. The barrier lies in our own hearts; sometimes we want to be saved *without* saying 'I have sinned.'

41, 42. *i.e.* 'I seek not human applause; you *do* seek it, which shows that the love of the Father is not in you.' Is His love shed abroad in *our* hearts?

43. See Matt. xxiv. 24. How Jewish history has verified this! The able commentator Bengelius says that since Christ's time there have been sixty-four false Christs.

44. 'Will' not, in verse 40, and 'can' not here, have the same root, mean the same thing, powerless *because* unwilling. When I find inability for a duty in myself or in any of you, I look for the cause of it in the *will*, and there it may be found, hidden perhaps under the cloak of humility. Nothing really beyond the measure of strength that God is waiting to give us can be duty; therefore, never say 'I cannot,' till you have quite laid aside your own inclination in the matter.

45. 'I do not come collecting evidence against you; that will be done too effectually by Moses, in whom you trust.'

46, 47. 'If ye believe Moses, who wrote of Me, ye would believe Me; but you reject him as well as Me' (Luke xvi. 31). It is instructive to notice how continually Christ appeals to the teaching which they professed to obey.

CHAPTER VI.

1-13. SEE Matt. xiv. 13-21. Again we have an interval, a break in the history. In the interim, Christ had ordained His twelve Apostles after a whole night of solitary prayer on the mountain. He had preached a sermon on the plain, resembling that on the Mount, but not the same; He had raised the widow's son at Nain, and the little daughter of Jairus; had made His second general circuit of Galilee, and

returned to Capernaum, revisiting the lake of Tiberias, and calming the storm. He had gone to Nazareth, and found no welcome; lastly, He had made His third general circuit of Galilee, and received the Baptist's sorrowful disciples after their Master's death. What an amount of toil and labour in these ceaseless journeyings, performed doubtless on foot!

2. The feeding of the five thousand occurred a year before the crucifixion, at the time of the passover preceding it.

4. Christ seems not to have been present at this Passover, the third during His ministry. John vii. 1, gives the reason of His absence from Judæa, which lasted some time.

6. To prove his faith; God still proves our faith by often leaving us wholly in the dark as to how He will help us. Faith bids us trust Him in the dark and not be anxious; we can always see the next step, but the step just beyond that is hidden till we come to it. Meanwhile we have experience and a promise. 'Ebenezer,' 'Jehovah Jireh.' What do those words mean?

7. Philip states the difficulty of the case; God frequently lets us feel the full difficulty of ours, that we may realise His all-providing care.

12. Only John gives the words 'Gather up,' etc.; there must be no waste, however abundant the supply; a wasteful man is an unthankful man.

13. The quantity gathered was direct evidence of the reality of the miracle, for five loaves they had now twelve baskets full, after that great multitude had been amply fed.

14. 'The prophet that cometh,' etc. (Deut. xviii. 15) was Christ, not the Baptist, as the Jews at first surmised. The words in which the people expressed their amazement are only recorded by John.

15-21. Matt. xiv. 22-33.

15. Christ would neither be made a temporal king, nor allow force to be used in His behalf. The mountain to which He withdrew was that on which He had fed the five thousand.

17. 'It was now dark'; it is often very dark before He

comes to our help. Mark says they were going to Bethsaida, near Capernaum.

18. The disciples had been tossed by rough waves before ; but *then* Christ was with them in the vessel, and even though He slept, His mere presence was protection enough, had they but realised it. Now they were in far worse case, for Jesus was not there. Practically they were alike safe both times, because on each occasion they were obeying His command. Mark tells us that the great wind was also 'contrary to them' (vi. 48). Often in our lives many things seem to be 'against' us all at once, but if, instead of looking at surrounding circumstances, we look with loving, childlike eyes straight up to God, He always helps us, generally in the simplest yet most unexpected way.

19. Five-and-twenty or thirty furlongs would bring them probably to the centre of the lake. 'Walking on the sea,' 'treading the waves,' was the Egyptian hieroglyphic for 'impossibility.' Mark says, 'He would have passed by them,' *i.e.* if they had trusted to their own skill in the storm, and not appealed to Him. Happily their longing for Him, and their cry of terror as He approached them—seen, indeed, but not recognised, were appeals to which His tender heart at once responded. Do you ask, 'If it was dark, how could they see Him?' So near the Passover there would doubtless be moonlight enough for that ; making visible the silvery crests of the waves, and the Divine Form that trod them as easily as though the unquiet sea were a velvet lawn. But in a sense yet more deeply true there is no darkness when we see Jesus—how can there be ? How dark all looks to a mother weeping over her child just taken from her, thinking of the loving eyes that will never again smile back her love ; of the clinging, tender, helpful hands, that will never more be outstretched to hers ; of the cold, grey shadow on the face that was her sunshine. Ah ! how does she bear it ? Listen ; a voice says in her heart, 'Daughter, do not you love *Me* better still ?' She looks up ; Jesus is speaking to her, and she answers, 'Yes, Lord, a great

deal.' It is not dark *then* ; she is no longer alone with her sorrow ; she knows that He is keeping her treasure safely, in a wiser, tenderer care, to be restored to her in immortal beauty in His Paradise of joy.

20. At first they dimly discerned a human figure, but seeing it treading the waves, they thought it was a phantom, a supernatural visitant, and cried out for fear. Then Jesus speaks, 'It is I, be not afraid.'

21. The instant passage of the vessel through some miles of water was a very remarkable miracle, wrought by the secret power of Him Who is the Lord of Nature. He had compassion on His disciples, who had toiled in fear and peril long enough. God only can suspend what men call the laws of Nature ; but they are really His laws, and we do well to study them. Mention some of His unwritten laws, such as the laws of health, for example, or of His Providential dealings with men.

22-24. The Evangelist's desire to bring all the minute circumstances vividly out, renders this somewhat involved. The day after the feeding of the five thousand, those of them who still remained on the eastern side of the lake remembered that on the previous night the disciples had gone away alone, taking the only boat. Jesus had not accompanied them, yet He was no longer on the eastern side. Where, then, was He ? The absence of other boats had probably prevented their following, for it was a long way round the bend of the lake by land ; but before morning other little boats had arrived, probably driven there by the wind that was contrary to the disciples, and in these boats they crossed to the western side.

25. Those who seek Jesus find Him. Theirs was a very natural inquiry ; but He doubtless saw that it arose from mere curiosity, and He never answered such questions.

26. He turns at once to a practical issue, pointing out their low motive in coming. 'Filled.' Three of the Evangelists use the same words to express the abundance of the supply. 'They did all eat, and were filled.'

27. From this point He proceeds at once to the exhortation

to seek the true Bread, as He had spoken to the woman of Samaria of the living water, leading up from the known and familiar to the unknown and Divine. Christ is far from forbidding labour for earthly sustenance; for work which we have a strong motive for doing, is one of earth's greatest blessings. The fourth commandment enjoins it (see also 2 Thess. iii. 10); but the other must be our paramount object. 'Sealed'; *i.e.* accredited as God's Ambassador.

28. This is a weighty question, and Christ answers it.

29. See Paul's reply to the Philippian gaoler.

30. Is it possible that they could seek a sign just after the miracle of the loaves which had fed them?

31. For forty years in the wilderness the manna fell regularly, and in a double supply on the sixth day; moreover, it kept good on the seventh day, but on no other. The daily provision was doubtless to teach them the great lesson of daily dependence upon God. 'Give us this day our daily bread.' Our faithless hearts want to have it sure for many to-morrows also; and it *is* sure, but in God's keeping, not ours. Is it not safer there? Stier computes that the Israelites consumed 1,400,000,000 bushels of it. The medicine found in Arabia, and called manna, is quite a different thing. The question seems to insinuate that Moses was superior to Christ, since he fed them not once, but daily.

33. 'The Bread of God.' Bread feeds, nourishes, satisfies us; it is familiarly called 'the staff of life.' So is Christ the hungry soul's food. May we indeed feed upon Him in our hearts by faith. 'Giveth life unto the world'; not to His own people only.

34. So the Samaritan woman said, 'Sir, give me this water'; but having once, in a certain sense, tasted it, she hastened to impart the blessing to others. The Jews were wholly selfish in their request, they thought it a pity to reject a blessing which would in that case be transferred to Gentiles. Perhaps the perpetuity of the manna made them hope for a frequent repetition of the miracle of the loaves.

35. Henceforth Christ speaks in the first person, drawing their attention directly to Himself. Stier says that the words 'I' or 'Me,' or their equivalent, occur thirty-five times in this discourse. True it is that the believer hungers and thirsts for more, more, more of Christ, and he who thus hungers shall be filled; He Who is the all-satisfying shall come and dwell with him, and still all earthly cravings.

36. Outward nearness does not necessarily bring people closer to Christ. Who could be farther from Him than Judas? I want you to open your *inside heart* to Him—to have day by day a deeper sense of His presence—'a closer enfolding in the arms of His tenderness.' God grant this to each of us; then, and only then, we shall be happy.

37. Here we have the Divine and the human side; 'The Father giveth,' etc., that is one great truth; 'him that cometh,' etc., that is another. With the first we have nothing to do; with the last, everything. Scripture often places contrasted (not opposing) truths close together, as in Phil. ii. 12, 13; two errors may be in direct opposition to each other, but two truths never. The Divine certainty of the Father's gift takes effect only by the voluntary coming on our part. Are *we* coming to Christ? Remember, it must be a continual coming. 'In no wise.' What strong, precious words! Strong enough to bear the burden of a whole world's sin, if sinners will but turn to Him. The door of salvation is open wide; but what does that avail those who will not enter? What despairing faces will turn away when it is shut against them for ever!

38. How plainly He tells them whence He came! Are *we* seeking to do our own will, or God's?

39. 'There shall not the least grain fall upon the earth' (Amos ix. 9). Christ is the Gift of God to perishing sinners; and they are God's gift to Him. What a moment it will be when those who came to Him in their utmost need and woe are presented by Him to the Father, saved, justified, glorified, perfectly sinless for ever, the sleeping dust raised, body and

soul clothed with immortality! Hear the sublime words which will then usher the whole multitude of the redeemed to their thrice blessed Home, 'Behold I and the children whom Thou hast given Me.' Then, indeed, 'He will see of the travail of His soul, and be satisfied' (Isa. liii. 11). Oh! to join

'The triumph song of heaven.'

40. Here we have the Divine and human side together. God's will is that we should see and believe—know Him now by faith; this is our part, the blessed result is His. Do you say, 'I cannot see Him'? Then *feel* after Him—like a blind man groping his way in some unknown place; and, as you go, say at every step, 'Lord, show me Thyself.' Persevere in this, and you will most surely find your Saviour: either the darkness will roll away in some glad moment, or a faint light will gradually brighten into the perfect day.

41, 42. The Jews murmured at His claiming to have come down from heaven—from the very Throne of God; they thought they knew His whole history—His birth and parentage (Luke iv. 22).

43. 'Murmur not,' etc. Christ seems to imply, 'You should have asked *Me* that question. I alone can answer it.' How much perplexity we might save ourselves and others by bringing our difficulties to Him, instead of complaining to this person or that! How prone we are to go to any one rather than to the only Friend Who really understands us!

'Were half the breath thus vainly spent
To heaven in supplication sent,
Our cheerful song would oftener be,
"Hear what the Lord hath done for me."'

44. Here is the Divine side, 'draw him.' You all feel at times that 'drawing'—as with cords of love. Oh! do not resist it! God does not *compel* or *force* us to obey. Nothing but his felt need, and awakening memories of his father's love, brought back the prodigal; had he crushed them down,

and said, 'I will starve rather than humble myself,' he must have starved—there was nothing else before him.

45. This practical act of coming to Christ is the proof that we are taught of God, Who inspired the desire to come, and gave the strength for it. Remember that we must be learners always—through all eternity; it will be part of the bliss of heaven—one of its many unspeakable delights. Oh! do come to Jesus *now—to-day!* I ask you, I entreat you, as if I were pleading with each one of you alone. It may be that your whole future hangs upon this moment.

46. We could not look upon Him and live.

47. See John v. 24. How evident it is, from comparing these two verses, that faith in God and in Christ are the same act, followed by the same results! Those who rejected the Divine Son have no true faith in the Divine Father.

48. See verse 35. How patiently He gives them 'line upon line'!

49. Manna sustained life; but no food is life-giving. The Bread of God both gives and sustains. Centuries before, Zechariah had asked, i. 5, 'Your fathers, where are they?' Generations pass away like autumn leaves, but the leaves perish; the souls live on—they have an after-history. You will realise how completely we do pass away from earth if you think that perhaps not one of you has a great-grandparent living, though you have all had eight. It is hard to believe how very soon we shall be forgotten. A lady, whom I know well, has told me that her husband, who is far from being an old man, could prove himself heir to a large estate, if he could ascertain the second Christian name of one of his grandmothers, and the Church where she was married; but no research can find out either. Had but one of her letters, properly signed and dated, been preserved, it would have settled the question as to name. Yet, and this is the lesson for us, her works are following her still, both in this world and the next. God grant that when my name and memory have perished like hers, hundreds may be better, and happier,

and wiser men and women for what you are learning here, through the impress that *you* will leave on generations to come! Tennyson truly says,

‘Our mothers make us most.’

50. Whoso feeds upon Christ shall never die the second death; to him his death-day shall be his birthday.

51. More and more plainly Christ speaks; His Body broken for us—His blood shed. Oh! precious Sacrifice once offered! Oh! life-giving Death! Do we realise that He suffered for *us*, or do we stand beholding afar off? Is He asking us, ‘Is it nothing to you that I suffered all this?’

52. So Nicodemus asked (John iii. 4). Only a spiritual understanding can discern spiritual truths. Lord, ‘open Thou mine eyes.’

53. Again He takes up the subject of their private reasoning, as in verse 43, and shows how indispensable it is to feed upon Him. It was a hard saying. He said this standing before them in life and health—in manhood’s prime of vigour. No one can understand it till the thirsty heart drinks in of His fulness.

54. Christ Himself is the Life. How beautiful is St. Paul’s parenthesis, ‘Christ (Who is our life)’! (Col. iii. 4.)

55. Jer. xv. 16.

56. What is it to abide in Christ? It means to take refuge in Him, as Noah took refuge in the ark, when God ‘shut him in.’ Doubtless it was so shut that he could not open the door to take in the perishing ones, piteous suppliants, no longer scoffers. The simile holds good in another point: Noah, though safe, was still tossed, as we are, on the waves of a troublesome world; but in some points the comparison fails—Noah had only a temporary shelter, but if we seek refuge, take sanctuary, in Christ, we have an enduring one. Our dwelling in Him gives safety, shelter, protection. His dwelling in us has a personal individual meaning; it gives a deep sense of union with Him, a consciousness that we belong to Him, and He to us.

57. 'I live,' etc. Christ here speaks as Man and Mediator. His spending whole nights in prayer illustrates His meaning. As He lived by the Father, so we live by Christ.

58. This is a summary of what had been already said. It has been well remarked that when we attempt to grasp this truth without the figurative expressions, it goes away from us like water when the vessel is broken; our wisdom lies in raising our minds to Christ's chosen words. Remember that this chapter has nothing to do with the Lord's Supper, which was instituted a year later, but that Holy Sacrament has everything to do with the great truths here taught. The Jews ate manna corporeally and with murmurings; we must feed upon Christ spiritually, by faith with thanksgiving.

59. Christ still taught in the synagogue, though the Jews stumbled at His words, and murmured at Him.

60. An outer circle of disciples, not the twelve. 'A hard saying,' hard to be understood or accepted.

61, 62. If they were offended at the mention of His giving His life for the world, they would be equally offended, or stumbled, by the crowning proofs of His Messiahship, given by His glorious resurrection and ascension, and the coming of the Holy Ghost according to His own promise.

63. Flesh as flesh could profit nothing, nor could His flesh avail them when He ascended corporeally into heaven. His words 'are life.'

64. We, whose aim it is to *train*, to mould character, are sometimes discouraged when we see no result from our work; but we see how much sorer discouragements Christ had, for He could look straight down into the cold, careless, selfish hearts that would never believe, never love Him, though He laid down His life.

65. See verse 44.

66. Many a journey perhaps they had taken with Him, but now they 'turned back' to their old life, whatever it may have been, and their day of grace was over. What would those lost souls now give to undo that day's decision! It was their own

act and deed. He did not say to them—He did not even say to Judas—‘Go’!

67. Tender, touching question! He knew that in this winnowing of His followers only the chaff had blown away—not one grain with it, yet He *felt* the desertion!

68. This time Peter’s words are noble; he puts forward not his zeal or fidelity, but the Lord Jesus. ‘To whom shall we go?’ Eighteen centuries have passed, and the question remains unsolved! Men have tried many substitutes and never found one that made them happy, either for time or for eternity. To abandon Christ is to face blank desolation! Lord, we cannot do without Thee, we would not if we could!

69. This seems to say, ‘we came because we believed; we remain because we *know*!’ There are many degrees of faith, but here there is absolute certainty, which does not admit of degrees. Calm deliberate certainty is faith’s culminating point, till it be lost in sight.

70, 71. ‘*One of you is a devil.*’ What did Judas think of these words? Probably he never appropriated them to himself at all. Sin and hardness of heart utterly blind men to their true character.

CHAPTER VII.

1. To Christ Himself an immediate death by stoning would have involved far less suffering than the scourge and the cross; but His work would have been incomplete, and prophecy unfulfilled, had He died any death but that foretold. Judæa contained the tribes of Judah, Benjamin, Simeon and Dan. Samaria lay north of it, and Galilee north of Samaria. See John iv. 3, 4.

2. This was the last of the three annual festivals (Levit. xxiii. 34-44). It was also called the Feast of Ingathering, and was meant to commemorate the dwelling in tents in the wilderness journey; we too are wayfarers, not yet possessing a city of habitation, but there is a Home preparing for us. The other festivals were the Passover, and Pentecost, which has

three other names, the Feast of Weeks, of Wheat-harvest, or of the First-fruits (See Smith's 'Dictionary of the Bible').

3, 4. Evidently His brethren were not all as yet disciples, since they spoke thus; perhaps it was partly from vanity that they urged this display of His power. They were far different later on, when we find them among the one hundred and twenty disciples who waited in the 'upper chamber' (Acts i. 13, 14) for the coming of the Holy Ghost.

5. See Matt. iii. 20, 21.

6. *i.e.* any time will be suitable for *you*, but more than you know of hangs on every movement of Mine.

7. 'Ye bear no testimony against it'; 'Me it hateth' (John xv. 18).

8. He chose to go up alone; after, not with, the multitude:

9. Christ always waited till His full time came. Earth waited four thousand years for Him; and still 'the wheels of Providence move slowly'; we strain our ears to listen for them, and there comes no sound, no token, till, in the very crisis, prayer is answered, the falling stroke stayed, or turned into a blessing: and so man's extremity proves God's opportunity.

10. He probably took some other route than that taken by the caravan companies; perhaps He set off on the first day of the feast, and arrived on the evening of the third, showing Himself on the fourth day, about 'the midst of the feast.'

11. 'Sought Him' for no good purpose.

12. 'Murmuring;' whispered words, not meant to be generally heard; there were differences of opinion: some esteemed Him, others, the priests especially, charged Him with leading the multitude astray.

13. His friends were afraid to speak openly for Him. How often is this the case still!

14. He had probably not visited Jerusalem for a year and a half.

15. Christ had not studied at any Rabbinical school; the rulers knew that, but 'they leave much out of account who make no allowance for the teaching of God'! He teaches by

ways inscrutable to us ; but sometimes our blind eyes see how wonderfully even the sharp lesson met our need. O our Father, Thou art the very Fount of wisdom ; we come to Thee, to be taught Thine own lessons in whatever ways Thou wilt.

16, 17. Those who strive to do the will of God shall be left in ignorance of no necessary truth. Obey, and you will be taught ; follow the light you have, and it will brighten more and more unto the perfect day ; soon the darkness will be past for ever. O glorious light of heaven ! seen dimly now through mists of tears ; but it is *there*, and every weary step brings us nearer if we are Christ's. We have only to wait 'till the day break and the shadows flee away.' But our waiting-time must be full of work for God, Whose heartiest approvals are for His hardest workers. In this way life can be made to yield extraordinary happiness ; it gives such countless opportunities for doing good—in other words, for 'doing the will of God.' Whose will are *we* doing ?

18. False teachers seek their own glory, true teachers seek Christ's. A serpent-bitten Israelite would not have been cured by looking at Moses ; had anyone done so he would have been told to look *up* and live. Give instances of people who sought their own glory. Isaiah xxxvi. 18-20, and xxxvii. 36-38. Acts v. 36, Acts xix. 13-17.

19. See Exodus xxiv. 3, 4. 'To kill me' ; this explains perhaps the object of their search, verse 11.

20. Their wicked charge was in itself a breach of the sixth commandment.

21. He had done so many works that we might be at a loss to know to which He now referred, and *why* He spoke of one wrought eighteen months before, *viz.* the healing of the impotent man (John v. 8, 9), but the renewed attempt to kill Him, see John v. 16, brought the whole to His mind as well as to theirs, and in this way He exposed their dark design.

22. Circumcision was enforced by Moses, but practised by Abraham and his descendants long before the time of Moses, and the Sabbath was instituted long before that.

23. Circumcising was undoubtedly servile work, yet performed on the Sabbath that the law of Moses should not be broken. If the Jews might do ceremonial work, surely the Lord of the Sabbath might perform an act of mercy. How gladly would His enemies have risen up and said 'it was only a seeming cure ; the man is as ill as ever !' No voice durst say it ; the cure was well known and permanent. Explain the words 'every whit whole.'

24. Judge *righteously* ; do not condemn in Me what you approve in Moses. Our judgments are often warped by our feelings, our interests, our affections, our very prejudices ; we are never safe when judging others : it sets *self* on the judgment seat, a very dangerous place. How much we need the lesson in Gal. vi. 1 !

25. A proof that the rulers *were* seeking His life, and that their purpose was known.

26. They might well say He spoke boldly. He had nothing to hope from the rulers, and, till His hour came, nothing to fear. 'We are immortal till our work is done,' and how much more was He ! They naturally thought that He had everything to fear from His powerful enemies. 'Can the rulers indeed know,' etc., was perhaps asked in irony.

27. This was their line of argument. Messiah's descent will be mysterious. True. This man's descent is not mysterious. False. Therefore He is not the Messiah. False. They little knew the mystery of the Incarnation ; to the Virgin Mother herself it must have seemed as marvellous as it does to us to think that the babe on her knee, dependent on her care, in the sweet clinging helplessness of infancy, was in truth the very God. How the rejection of Christ's Messiahship fulfils Isa. liii. 1-3 !

28. 'I come from God, Whom ye know not,' but it was wilful ignorance.

29. '*I* know Him.' Well might He say this, coming from the bosom of the Father !

30. After so clear a statement, and the proofs afforded by

His many miracles, one would expect to read that many of those around Him believed ; instead of which we learn 'they sought therefore to take Him.' One stood there friendless and alone, amidst the vast crowd of hostile faces, on some of which hatred, if not murder, was written ; yet, till the appointed time came, they were utterly powerless. It was now autumn, and His hour was to come the next spring.

31. Though the leaders rejected Him, the poor heard Him gladly, and said amongst themselves, 'If this be not the Christ, what can Messiah do more ?'

32. The jealous Pharisees thought it high time to stop these murmurs. 'The Sanhedrim never before or after took so decisive a step. Yet the coercion by which He defeated one of their most deliberate designs was a purely moral one (see verses 45, 46) ; and much more extraordinary than when, to protect Himself from sudden violence, He had recourse to miracle on the spot' (Greswell).

33. He would remain with them a little while, whether they would or no ; but it was *only* a little while. All our earthly blessings are transitory, those upon whom we lean most are often soonest taken.

34. They might easily have come to Him then, as He stood pleading in their midst ; but a far different day was hastening on (Hosea v. 6). There are few more awful words than 'Too late.' Esau, his father's idol, came too late for the blessing that Isaac yearned to utter. 'Ye cannot come.' Terrible words of irreversible doom. Now His loving arms are open to you ; therefore come *now*, and be safe for evermore. Christ's enemies could never go where *He* was going.

35, 36. Christ takes no notice of these various questions, which evidently arose from mere captious curiosity. There are many allusions in Scripture to the scattered tribes of Israel — Amos ix. 9, Ezek. xi. 16, Isa. xi. 12, and xxvi. 15.

37. The eighth day of the feast closed not only that festival, but all the festivals for the year. The next would be the ever memorable Passover ! 'If any man thirst.' This is an

allusion to the ceremony of drawing water from Siloam, and solemnly offering it in the Temple with sacred music, and rejoicing, with the sound of trumpets. What an offer Christ's was! See John iv. 10, and Rev. xxi. 6. Thirst seems the one qualification required, and coming to Christ the sole act. Our mistake is that we carry our thirsting hearts to broken, empty cisterns, not to the living Fount. In John iv. 10 the prominent thought is Christ's willingness to give, contrasted with the woman's hesitation to draw water from the well for Him. Here the prominence is given to *Himself*, as the everlasting *Fountain*. It is a proclamation to the entire world; never doubt that it includes *you*.

38, 39. These verses mean that the Holy Spirit's influence in the heart is not enclosed within that heart's limits. A Christian whose religion is no blessing to any one, and who says he 'keeps it to himself,' is only a Christian in name. True soul-life cannot be hidden. The Holy Spirit was to come to the orphaned Church after the Ascension, not whilst their own Master was a Living Presence among them, and therefore Christ said, 'It is expedient for you that I go away' (John xvi. 7).

40. 'The prophet' spoken of by Moses (Deut. xviii. 15). The wonder is that all did not own it; but a cold, careless, prejudiced heart darkens and clouds the understanding.

41, 42. The Christ—the very Messiah. The objectors did not take the trouble to ascertain that Christ, though coming out of Galilee, was born at Bethlehem—David's city. Never was prophecy more unconsciously fulfilled. Augustus, whose taxing was the human means of bringing Mary thither, had never heard of her, nor of the prophecy, and she herself had apparently received no intimation from the angel, and doubtless went reluctantly. Moreover, the words in Micah v. 2, though perfectly clear after the event, may never have occurred to her in connection with herself at this crisis. So God leads *us* where He would have *us* go; He does not let *us* grope blindfold; He takes *us* tenderly by the hand, and at the last

step of all, we *see*—see where He has all the while been leading us by unknown paths to the brightness of our Father's Home. Some day His children will know what it is to be *there*, and meanwhile we must press onward.

43. They were separated into parties.

44. See verse 30.

45. The officers who had been sent (verse 32). It seems, from this and the succeeding verses, that the chief priests and Pharisees were assembled in council. They thought, apparently, that nothing would be easier than to bring Him. Little they knew!

46. Noble testimony! Never man spake such words of truth, love, wisdom, power, holiness. In our truest words there may be unconscious exaggeration, which is a form of untruth; in our loving words there is often self-love; in our wisest words there is much ignorance; in our holiest words there may be much that is not the heart's spontaneous utterance. The officers doubtless understood little of the deep truths that He spoke; which makes it the more wonderful to see them stand spell-bound, actually powerless, before Him. We may be sure that they would not have confessed themselves unmanned, had it been possible to do their errand.

47. They were not deceived, they had gained a glimpse of the truth. Such conduct in their own servants was intolerable to the Pharisees.

48. Many of them, besides Joseph and Nicodemus, did believe, but, as yet, not openly. Even in *this* council a few words were uttered for Him.

49. 'This people'; i.e. this ignorant mob.

50, 51. After two years and a half Nicodemus re-appears, still timid, or his defence of Christ would have shown more spirit and firmness; it was good as far as it went. As yet he did not go heart and soul with either side, in life and profession a Pharisee, in heart a weak disciple; he appeals only to the Law, not to their consciences, not to Christ's Messiahship. Truly 'the fear of man bringeth a snare' (Prov. xxix. 25)! Yet

even these soft words stung, and for the time prevented other attempts. It is interesting to note the gradual progress of this disciple, who was far braver now than when he came to Jesus by night, and quite fearless later on (John xix. 39). May *we* also grow in grace ! There is no standing still in religion : we go forward, or we lose ground—*which* are we doing at this moment ?

52. Even a word for Christ provoked this taunt. Two prophets had arisen out of Galilee, Jonah of Gath-hepher, and a far greater one, Elijah of Thisbe ; both places were in Galilee (2 Kings xiv. 25).

53. All went to their own houses except the homeless Saviour.

CHAPTER VIII.

1. THIS verse clearly belongs to Chapter VII. The Mount of Olives is a mile to the east of Jerusalem ; Gethsemane and Bethany were very near. David went weeping up Mount Olivet (2 Sam. xv. 30). It was on this mountain that Christ wept over Jerusalem, which appears like a map spread out before it, from a spot two thirds up the hill (Luke xix. 41, 42). Christ often passed the night there (Luke xxi. 37).

2. On previous occasions, Christ met the people in the Temple early in the day. Let us, too, seek Him early in the morning, ere the day's work sets in !

3, 4. It was hatred of Christ, not hatred of sin, that actuated them : He had foiled them on the previous day, so now they try another plan. It is right to bring a poor sinner to Jesus, but in this case the vile motive marred it utterly, though a good motive would not palliate a sin.

5. The custom of stoning such offenders had passed away ; probably they had no power to do it. The harsh sentence, 'Stone her,' would have been strangely unlike One so pitiful to sinners, and would have seemed like stepping out of His province and usurping civil authority. They must have felt sure that He would not say *that* ; but 'Spare her' would have suited them equally well, as enabling them to say that He disobeyed Moses and countenanced sin.

6. He was sitting when they came to Him, and at this point He stooped down and wrote on the ground. What He wrote, or why He did so, we are not told; perhaps it was to show aversion to entering on the subject.

7. 'Continued asking Him,' *i.e.* pressed for an answer. 'He lifted up Himself'; doubtless this time His glance took in each one of them: the miserable, despairing woman, her life trembling in the balance, and everything that makes life a blessing blighted, blasted, gone; and the cunning, malignant faces of the accusers to whom the sin was nothing, the opportunity of at last outwitting Christ everything. Listen to His answer: 'He that is without sin,' etc. Of course, this does not mean literally sinless, for all have sinned; but each man's conscience knew to what Christ referred, and spoke in a still small voice, more appalling than thunder, '*Thou art not the man to stone her.*' The 'stone' means the first stone, which was always cast by a witness or accuser, as a signal that by-standers should cast other stones, till the victim lay dead beneath them.

8. Evidently this second stooping down was to give them the opportunity of slinking away without meeting His eye.

9. Mighty power of conscience! What is conscience? Every part of our complex nature is fallen—the will most, the conscience least. Yet, though this inner monitor can never be wholly silenced, as we see in the case of these wicked men, it is often blinded, lulled into false peace, or so perverted that men call evil good and good evil. You may, however, be absolutely sure of this: nothing which conscience denounces can be right *for you*; do not argue with conscience—let its first protest suffice. Picture the group going out one by one, shame and conscious guilt written on their foreheads, 'beginning at the eldest,' the deviser perhaps of this foiled project; all felt that the trap they had laid for Christ had entangled themselves. The woman might have followed them; there was nothing to hinder it, unless some Divine attraction detained her. St. Augustine says, 'Two things were left alone together—misery and mercy.'

10. And now the last footstep died away, and He spoke to her, as she stood trembling, and astonished at the skill with which He had dispersed her accusers, and saved her from a terrible death, had their power sufficed to inflict it.

11. Christ was far from saying that she did not deserve condemnation; He merely left the matter as it was; He did not say 'Thy sins are forgiven,' far less did He bid her 'Go in peace.' He simply said, 'Go, and sin no more.' How one longs to know whether she threw herself at His feet, to thank Him for His wondrous mercy, and to entreat His pardon; surely she must have done. This whole narrative is wanting in some of the earliest MSS.; it seems to have been purposely omitted, under the impression that Christ could not have acted with such tenderness to one who expressed no penitence, but probably we do not know all that passed. In any case a copyist could easily omit this story, but who could invent it? Few of His works of love bear more manifestly the stamp of *Christ*.

12. These words were spoken in the Treasury, where there stood two colossal golden lamp stands, suspending a multitude of lamps, lighted probably every evening during the feast of Tabernacles, and diffusing their brilliancy, it is said, all over the city. Hence the peculiar appropriateness with which Christ styles Himself 'the Light of the world.' How dark it would be without Him! How dark it is to the heathen who never heard His name!

13. 'Record,' *i.e.* witness, or testimony. Notice how Christ meets this specious cavil.

14. Christ's own works were His credentials that He came from heaven. An ambassador does not bring a second with him to avouch his truth; all men know who he is and from what Court he comes.

15. *i.e.* according to Christ's supposed parentage.

16. It is as if He said, 'Were I to judge,' *i.e.* execute judgment, 'I should not do it alone; the Father's judgment and Mine are one.' 'I am not alone.' This must have been Christ's one sustaining consolation in the desolate solitude that earth

must have seemed to Him after heaven : adoring seraphim *there* ; *here*, dark scowling, hostile faces, stamped and branded ineffaceably with sin. Solitude amidst crowds of sinners was solitude indeed to Him !

17. See Deut. xvii. 6, 7, and xix. 15.

18. 'Here are the two Witnesses that your law requires.' Christ bore witness to Himself by His words and works ; the Father bore witness to Him by Old Testament prophecies, and on several occasions by audible words. Mention them, and say when they were uttered. Though the Divine Three are One, yet are they distinct Persons.

19. 'Where is Thy Father ?' Spoken 'not in ignorance, but in derision and insult' ; as meaning, 'Produce this other Witness' (Bloomfield).

20. The treasury was a part of the women's court, where the chests were placed for offerings—a place of great concourse (Mark xii. 41, 42).

21. 'Shall seek Me' ; *i.e.* shall go on vainly expecting the Messiah, Who had come and gone ; and obstinately rejecting the crucified Saviour, for Whom nevertheless some Jewish hearts are yearning. Not long ago, a Jewess, describing to a Christian girl their rigid fast on the annual Day of Atonement, said wistfully, 'You do not need it ; *you have your Saviour.*' Thank God *we have* ! 'Die in your sins.' Already they were dead through 'trespasses and sins' ; and many of them would fall with their ruined Temple.

22. Scornful, malignant taunt !

23. This does not refer to the contrast between the earthly and the Divine, though that is infinite, but to that between holiness and sin.

24. Twice in this verse does He repeat the awful threat : in verse 21 : men like to live in their sins, but the vilest would not like to die in them ; they will sin as long as they can, and repent before they die—that will make all safe. *Will it ?* Ah ! no ; death comes, finds them farther from God than ever, and cuts off hope for evermore. 'I am *He*.' They

understood Him well. See Deut. xxxii. 39 ; Isa. xliii. 10-13, xli. 4, and xlviii. 12. 'I am He.' Nothing can add to this, though we may each apply the words to our own felt need. 'I am He that will help, save, pardon, guide thee. I am He that will bring My ransomed child Home at last.'

25. 'Who art Thou ?' Hoping for an explicit answer, by which to entangle Him. What a weighty question is that of *motives* ! *Why* did I do or say this ?

26. This implies that He perceived their object, and that He *could* say many things, which they should hear on a far different occasion, but not then—not there.

27. How blind they must have been ! There is no blindness like that of a wilfully darkened mind which hates the light.

28. This was the plainest public intimation yet given of the manner and authors of His death. 'Then shall ye know' ; *i.e.* have ample evidence, though they would not own it.

29. He *seemed* to stand alone ; but the Father, Whom He perfectly pleased in all things, never left Him, though He *appeared* to do so in one awful hour, when a cloud of countless sins came between the agonized Face, looking up on the cross, and the Eternal Father's smile. Your sins and mine formed part of that dark cloud.

30. Words of such surpassing grandeur might well captivate some who heard them. As Stephen's face, in the prospect of a cruel death, shone like the face of an angel, from the reflected light of heaven, so, probably, Divine benignity beamed from Christ, as He dwelt on the sweet supporting consciousness of the Father's loving Presence.

31. Possibly those who believed drew closer round Him—gave some expression to their dawning faith, in which He urges them to continue ; to begin well is nothing, unless we go on well. The word 'continue' is translated in the Revised Version 'abide' ; *i.e.* 'dwell'—as a man does in his home, which is his centre, and refuge, and rest.

32. 'Make you free' : not from all sin—ah, no ! *that* is yet to come—but from the bondage, the love of it. Sin in the

Christian's heart is, by God's grace, sought and harboured no longer, but kept under—pressed down : a detested foe, not an imperious master, willingly obeyed.

33. Commentators differ as to who spoke these petulant words. Some think that the new converts uttered them in their great ignorance ; others, with more reason, suppose that the speakers were persons standing near. In any case, it was a strangely untrue remark ; there was the bondage in Egypt, the dreary captivity in Babylon, and their present subjection to the Romans, to say nothing of eighteen centuries of exile awaiting them.

34. Here Christ drives the ploughshare deeper—to a bondage they little dreamed of. See Prov. v. 22, and Rom. vi. 16-20.

35. There seems here an allusion to Hagar and her son, cast out at Sarah's pleasure. It has always seemed to me that Isaac's joyful mother might have let them remain—a nobler woman would have done ; but, in that case, Ishmael would have missed the hard nurture that God saw best for the founder of such a race as his, and so He brought good out of evil.

36. Free from the bondage and the guilt of sin—free to enter the Father's House as the happy children of that blessed Home.

37. He says openly, 'Ye seek to kill Me' ; and none of them deny it. *Why* did they seek to kill Him ? and what held them back from any immediate attempt ?

38. 'My Father'—'your father,' the devil, implied here, plainly stated in verse 44.

39. Abraham was justified both by faith and works, though only his works are here named. Compare the whole of Rom. iv. with James ii. 21-24. Truth, like a prism, has different sides. St. Paul, writing to converts from heathenism, accustomed to many senseless, cruel acts in idol worship, dwells strongly on the saving power of faith. St. James, called 'the Just,' writing to the scattered twelve tribes, as strongly urges practice as the test of faith.

40. Great, indeed, was the contrast between their unbelief and Abraham's faith and obedience, when, at God's command, he went out, not knowing whither (Heb. xi. 8), twice breaking up his home : the first time when God called him from Ur to Haran ; the second time, when, after his father Terah's death, he went at the Divine command from Haran into Canaan, being 'seventy and five years old.'

41. Truly they were doing the deeds of their father.

42. If they had retained anything of God's moral image they would love His Son. 'I came forth, and am come from God,' is only said by Christ, and denotes that His origin was Divine, as well as His mission.

43. *i.e.* 'The truths that I speak are unintelligible to you, because you cannot (*will* not) take them in.' It is humiliating to think how much that is uttered in our presence in church, or at family prayers, does not reach our ears at all, through the wandering of our thoughts. What a mockery such inattention is ! Yet, at times, we are all verily guilty of it. May the good Lord pardon us, for Christ's sake.

44. How clearly Scripture proves the personality of Satan ; that he is not a mere evil principle, but an ever-active responsible agent and doer of evil, our deadliest enemy. *Satan, sin, and hell*, are three profoundly awful facts. 'From the beginning' probably refers, not to the death of Abel, but of the whole human race in Adam's fall (1 Cor. xv. 22). 'Abode not in the truth.' Once Satan was pure, true, sinless, holy, rapturously happy, perhaps the highest created being. What memories he must have ! what anticipations of 'the wrath to come' ! what fathomless capacities for woe ! O good Shepherd, Who didst lay down Thy life for the sheep, hasten the time when the last torn, bleeding lamb, shall be snatched from his grasp for ever.

45. Had His words been less true they would have been more readily believed.

46. 'Which of you convicteth ?' etc. They had accused Him of breaking the Sabbath, and in John vii. 21-24, He had

challenged them on this count. They had also accused Him of blasphemy in saying that God was His Father, and in this chapter He defends His claim to Sonship.

47. In another form the thought is, God's children hear His words; you do not hear them, therefore you are not God's. *Whose are we?* To 'hear' in this verse means to 'obey.'

48. 'A Samaritan' was a far stronger reproach than a Gentile. To be under Roman rule was bad, but Samaritan rule would have been intolerable. How infamous their other charge!

49. Notice the calm dignity with which He answers it. See 1 Peter ii. 23. So Paul said (Acts xxvi. 25). 'Dishonour Me'; the language of a wounded heart. The higher any one's position, and the nobler his nature, the more exquisitely he feels reproach and contempt. He takes no notice of their charge that He was a Samaritan, that He might not seem to share their scorn of a nation that had welcomed Him.

50. 'There is One Who seeks My glory,' Who will vindicate Me, and judge My despisers.

51. See John xi. 26. To see death, to taste of death, to die, have exactly the same meaning. Our beloved go hence, we lay their mortal garments in the grave, and we feel sad and lonely, and as if life had almost become a blank; for the voice which was our music is hushed, and none but Christ can comfort our desolate hearts; but *are* they indeed dead? *No*; they have just begun to live—to live an intenser life than we can form any conception of!

52. How revolting their insolence! Christ did not mean that His servants should not pass through what men *call* death. Think what it would be, with our present limited powers, if life's term were not seventy but a hundred years, where would room be found for so many helpless ones? Doubtless, the bright dwellers on the other side think the angel of death one of our best friends. Christ tasted death for every man. He went through the dark valley that we may find it only the valley of the *shadow* of death. There is wonderful force and

meaning in these words. The *shadow* of the keenest sword ever fashioned cannot hurt us ; nor can death, since Jesus conquered it for evermore.

53. Our most illustrious ancestors died long since. Whom do you claim to be ?

54. Many say that God is their God ; but what if *He* says, 'I never knew you' ?

55. With what just severity He speaks ! 'Like unto you, a liar.' Keeping His word is the proof that we know Him.

56. Abraham, the friend of God, was honoured with unusual intercourse with Him. Perhaps he saw Christ's day in some unrecorded vision. We see from Gen. xviii. 1, 2, 13, 17, that the Three who deigned to partake the meal prepared by Sarah were far more than man, far higher than angels. It was on this occasion that God said of Abraham, 'I know him.'

57. The Jews considered fifty years the completion of manhood ; but it would seem that Christ's toilsome life made Him look worn beyond His age. Even His youth, spent at the carpenter's bench, had the awful shadow of the Cross upon it all the time.

58. 'I am' (Exod. iii. 14). This Name, used in the Old Testament by the Father, is here employed by the Son, showing His equality with God. 'I am' implies that He never *came* into being, but existed eternally.

59. See Luke iv. 30. They would have stoned Him for blasphemy without even the form of a trial ; but, hidden in some way from their sight, He passed through the midst of them. How easily could He have done the same in the garden of Gethsemane !

CHAPTER IX.

1. JESUS passing out of the Temple, and now visible once more, saw there a man blind from his birth. Those whose infirmities made them dependent on charity used to sit at the gates or avenues of the Temple, especially at the hours of prayer (Acts iii. 1, 2).

2. They did not mean that the man was born blind because

of his sins in some previous state of existence, for Scripture plainly teaches that in this world we have one life only—we pass this way but once, and it decides our place for ever. What they meant was that sin *somewhere*, probably that of his parents, had caused his affliction; and in a broad general sense it is most true that sin is the parent of sorrow and disease. If drunkenness could be stamped out as the plague has been, or even as nearly as small-pox is, in thirty years' time half our asylums and infirmaries, and two-thirds of our workhouses, might be turned to happier uses. But it is cruel to apply a broad general rule to individual cases, and we may err like the barbarous people of Melita (Acts xxviii. 4), who, seeing the viper hang on Paul's hand, said: 'No doubt this man is a murderer'!

3. Christ does not mean that they were more free from sin than others, but that his blindness was not a punishment for any particular sin.

4. What an example for us! Is it our constant thought, 'What can I do for my Saviour to-day'? 'The night cometh' for each one of us. Should we be sorry to see the lengthening shadows? Is the labourer sorry when the sun is setting in the golden west, and the quiet hush of eve pervades all nature? Not he, for he is weary; he has toiled the livelong day; and now he is going home to rest, and loving voices will greet his coming. Will it be so with *us*? Job says (vii. 2), 'A servant *earnestly desireth* the shadow,' *i.e.* the eventide; but life is so precious as working-time for God, that we must contentedly and gladly leave it to Him to decide when our little day shall end, and our sweet rest begin.

5. Though no longer visibly present, He is still the Light of the world, the Light of Life!

6. This was of course the symbol of cure, the miracle itself was wrought by Christ's direct will, and it was gradual, not instantaneous. This is not the only mention of anointing the eyes. See Rev. iii. 18.

7. He went to Siloam blind, the clay probably still on his

eyes, and returned seeing. This very pool is referred to (Isa. viii. 6), and used to denote the streams that shall make glad the city of God (Psa. xli. 4). The word Shiloh also means 'sent.' (See the Gospel Treasury, p. 521.)

8, 9. Opinions differed then as widely as now, even on a plain matter of fact, the question of a man's identity with himself. It always will be so while men's minds differ as they do.

'The human spirits saw I on a day
Sitting and looking each a different way.'

The once blind beggar was the same man, but in a new world, for now he saw; he felt no doubt at all of his own identity, nor shall we when our eyes open to the glories of Paradise, in that Home in which we shall be perfectly sinless for ever.

10, 11. How natural the question; how brief and yet how exact the answer!

12, 13. Failing to learn where Jesus was, they brought the man to the council, then probably sitting. Imagine the vexation of the Pharisees at seeing him who had received his sight, in the first glow of his joy.

14. Another Sabbath miracle, and on this occasion the cure was not wrought by a mere word, as in John v. 8, 9.

15, 16. Again we notice the simple, direct truthfulness of his answers; and observe the strongest evidences of Christ's mission turned against Him. Among those who took His part may have been Joseph, or Nicodemus, whose question on a point of law (John vii. 50, 51) had already been of service to Christ's cause. The reasoning was conclusive, for God would not give an impostor such miraculous powers.

17. The man had proved his faith by the one sure test of simple obedience in going to Siloam. Give examples from Scripture showing that obedience is the proof of faith. The conviction that the wondrous Stranger Who sat on Jacob's well was a prophet, was one of the first steps in the conversion of the woman of Samaria.

18, 19. Hoping to throw doubt on the miracle by cross-questioning the parents, they examine them on three points. Is this your son? Was he born blind? How then doth he now see?

20, 21. Having answered the two first queries in the affirmative, they cast the onus of the third on their son. Parents are not often so selfish as to back out of a difficulty or a crisis by exposing their children to it. Assuredly they did know Who had wrought the cure; when their son came to them in his glad thankfulness, looking on their faces for the first time, the inquiry would instantly be made, 'Who gave you sight?' Cowardice often leads to prevarication.

22, 23. They feared being excommunicated. There were two kinds of excommunication; the first, for light offences, excluded a man from the synagogue, and from approaching any of his relatives or friends within four cubits; and this was in force for thirty days. The other, called the curse, excluded him for life, nor might any one sell him necessary food (abridged from Buxtorf). We cannot realise what it is to be banned, cut off from human love and sympathy and intercourse, meeting only cold scornful looks, and deprived of the solace of attending God's worship in His house. (See Isa. lxvi. 5.) Under all that weight of woe the Comforter has sustained many a convert from Judaism or paganism to his life's end.

24. Some suppose that the words 'Give God the praise,' or, as in the Revised Version, 'Give glory to God,' are to be taken literally; 'thank *Him* for the cure, and not a sinner like this man.' Others consider it a form of administering an oath, the same words being addressed by Joshua to Achan (vii. 19).

25. This implies no belief on his part that Christ was a sinner, but that on a matter of opinion he did not expect his words to have weight with the Pharisees, which they ought to have respecting a fact that had just altered his whole life. 'Whereas I was blind, now I see.' Do *we* see sin in ourselves, and preciousness in Christ, to which we were once blind?

26, 27. Evidently he was more than a match for them;

they try to entangle him with repeated questions, and with keen irony he treats them as anxious inquirers, on the very brink of conversion.

28. Here they were right in saying, 'Thou art His disciple'; but would Moses have acknowledged *them*?

29. *i.e.*, there can be no doubt who Moses was; we know all about *him*; but no one can say who this pretender is.

30. Truly they *ought* to have recognised Him.

31. He argues with great force and clearness, 'God heareth not sinners,' that is whilst they cleave to their sins (Psa. lxvi. 18; Zech. vii. 12, 13). The broken cry of penitence beseeching pardon, is dear to Him; He hears it amidst the Hallelujahs (Psa. x. 17).

32. The Jews esteemed the opening the eyes of one born blind a peculiar sign of the Messiah, never wrought by Moses or the prophets, so far as our knowledge goes; nor had any surgical operation effected it. About A.D. 1728 Dr. Cheselden couched a boy of fourteen, blind from birth, and he saw perfectly; such cases have occurred since, not miraculously, but by God's blessing on wonderful skill in the use of suitable means. The means that Christ used would have been utterly futile in any hands but His.

33. How his courage grows as he speaks! so does every grace when exercised; love, faith, meekness, patience, self-control, or any other good gift, use it, and you shall have more and more 'unto the perfect day.' *Try* it, and you will experience it, and will find that each temptation, vanquished in God's strength, makes future victories easier; and rest after the warfare will be sweet indeed; no words can utter it. O, Saviour, Who hast conquered for us, help us moment by moment!

34. Unable to control their rage, they burst forth in one of the most pharisaical speeches on record. The fact of his being born blind is now tacitly admitted as a proof of sin, though they would just before have denied it. Then, in hot indignation, they 'cast him out' of the synagogue.

35. He was not long left alone; Jesus heard of his excom-

munication, came to him, and asked, 'Dost thou believe on the Son of God?' In order to lead him quickly to Diviner knowledge, this question reached purposely beyond what he already knew of Jesus as a prophet.

36. How beautiful an answer! It is always the humble and the teachable who learn.

37. 'Seen Him.' Yes, the eyes just opened were gazing now on 'the Light of the world'; nor was it sight only. 'He speaketh with thee.' Do *we* speak to Him, pour out our full hearts to Him, and listen for His answering voice? True, we see Him not, but that bliss, too, is in store for us if we can say, 'Whom having not seen, we love.' Meanwhile we may have His own blessing promised to those who 'have not seen and yet have believed' (John xx. 29).

38. 'Lord, I believe.' A joyful eternity hung on those three blessed words.

39. This was one purpose; not *the* purpose achieved by His coming. 'See' in a double sense; 'become blind,' judiciously as well as wilfully. God hardened Pharaoh's heart judiciously after Pharaoh had hardened his own heart; compare Exodus v. 2, and vii. 3. That awful process is never said to begin on God's side. The salvation of the righteous is His work; the destruction of the wicked is their own.

40. Their enlightenment was beyond all question, they thought.

41. If ye were blind and waiting for the light, ye would be free from the guilt of shutting it out; your case is hopeless whilst you continue to think that you see.

CHAPTER X.

1. THIS comparison was familiar to the Jews. (See Jer. xxiii., Zech. xi., etc). Luther says, 'The sheep quickly hears the voice of the shepherd, follows no one else, depends entirely on him, seeks help from him alone, and cannot help itself.' Christ is 'the door'—there is no access but through Him.

2. This applies to all faithful pastors, in their several degrees ; but strictly and especially to the One chief Shepherd.

3. 'The sheep hear His voice'—how gladly !

'Each one smileth sweet
Who hears the Master's feet.'

'Calleth them by name'; what tender, individual care ! St. Paul followed Him closely in this (See Acts xx. 31). 'The sheep follow Him.' They know not the windings of the route, but well do they know the *end*. Lord, bring us thither in entire peace !

4. This is Christ's own portrait of Himself. He does not point to rough places and say, 'Go there.' He Himself goes first, and bids them 'Come.' There is all the difference in the world between following an unfailing Guide and going forth on untrodden, dangerous paths *alone*. Do we know and love His voice ?

5. How much less wise are men ! See Gal. iii. 1, 2 Tim. i. 15. The worse the advice, the more readily is it often followed.

6. How often this is said even of Christ's own teaching !

7. Mention other similitudes which Christ used in speaking of Himself. 'The door of the sheep,' *i.e.* the way into the fold. A fold is a place of safety, of shelter from the storm, a place where all needful provision is made ; it is always in readiness ; the sheep know where to find it ; not like a moving tent sometimes put up, sometimes taken down, set here or there, as circumstances require. Moreover, it is guarded, watched over, not left to itself or to the charge of the flock. In these and other respects it is a type of Christ's fold on earth, which is a place of safety to those who do not wander from it ; they are sheltered, guarded, watched over, not left to protect and provide for themselves as best they can. Each believer is at his Heavenly Father's finding for *all* he needs. What will the heavenly fold be, where we shall be 'kept above all keeping' in Christ's immediate presence ? O, Saviour, guide us in our wilderness journey, lest we wander from Thee and miss our way for ever !

8. 'Thieves and robbers,' who here stand for false prophets, rejected by the true sheep, blindly followed by others. (See Ezek. xxxiv. 1-4.)

9. '*Any man.*' How welcome are all who come ! 'Go in' for rest and shelter, 'go out' to green pastures and still waters.

10. 'Have life,' in sparkling precious drops *here, there* from the everlasting Fount.

11. 'Giveth His life.' Oh ! matchless token of His love !

12. 'The wolf' ; Satan, or wicked men.

13. The hireling fleeth because he is *only* a hireling ; *i.e.* he loves the wages but not the flock. A faithful servant cares for his master's interests, and not merely for the money that he receives. 'Are you carrying that lamb because it is hurt ?' a shepherd was asked. 'It is not hurt, but it is just tired and done,' was the beautiful answer, which illustrates how we are cared for.

14. See 2 Tim. ii. 19. Christ's close, intimate knowledge of His people is a wonderfully blessed truth. He knows their frailty, their temptations, their difficulties, and dangers, and trials ; and with Him to 'know' means to 'care for,' to 'help and succour.' How many aching hearts, from the days of Moses till now, have been soothed by the words God spake to him of the children of Israel, 'I know their sorrows' (Exod. iii. 7) ; or by those in Hosea xiii. 5, 'I did know thee in the wilderness.' What a joy to remember, if we feel the day long and the burden heavy, that Christ's loving Eye is on us, and He will not let anything be really too hard for us !

15. What a claim to absolute equality ! 'I lay down My life,' etc. ; *i.e.*, I die in their place that they may live ; I die a temporal death, that they may not die an eternal death.'

16. 'Other sheep' ; *i.e.* the Gentiles. (See John xvii. 20, 21.) This is not merely a prediction ; it is the expression of a purpose to draw them to Himself. Literally it should be 'flock' ; it is a different word in the Greek from that translated 'fold.' In Christ's fold one arth, men have built up many partitions, and they seem far more intent on raising these partitions higher

and higher, than on the safe keeping of the outer wall which separates the Church from the world, and of this Satan takes great advantage. It seems as if nothing would ever bring things right but Christ's second coming. Lord, hasten the time !

17. No thought can picture the love of the Father to the Son before all worlds began ; but the Father's love to Him as His *incarnate* Son reached its consummation in that sublimest and most affecting of all acts. 'Take it again.' What would have become of us, and of Christianity itself, had death held Him still ? The resumption of life was as important to us as the 'laying it down.'

18. No words can prove more strongly that His death and resurrection were both voluntary acts of His own. His life was not *lent* to Him, as our fleeting lives are lent, on very uncertain tenure, to us ; it was His own.

19, 20. Christ's servants can be charged with nothing worse than this.

21. Some were revolted at such baseness. Well they might be !

22. A great feast was held at the dedication of the first Temple (1 Kings viii. 63-66). Ezra vi. 16-22 describes that at the dedication of the second Temple. The dedication here mentioned by St. John was in memory of the purifying of the Temple by Judas Maccabæus, B.C. 165, under Antiochus Epiphanes, after three years' heathen profanation. This festival, unlike others, was celebrated throughout Judæa, not at Jerusalem only. The feast of Tabernacles had taken place two months earlier, and during the interval Christ probably remained in or near Jerusalem.

23. Josephus says that this porch was part of Solomon's structure. Jesus walked there for shelter, the season being winter.

24. *He* had not made them doubt ; it was their own determined unbelief.

25. If they resisted the evidence of His words which they had heard, and of His miracles which they had seen, what

assertion could convince them? He had claimed equality with God so unmistakably, that His enemies would have stoned Him for blasphemy.

26. You do not possess the spirit of meek and humble disciples. 'The meek will He teach His way.'

27, 28. See on verse 8. 'I give,' not 'I *will* give.' It is a present gift, to be enjoyed more and more *for ever*. An heir to a great estate reaps many advantages from it in his minority; it is his, but not in actual possession. He is not ready yet; he is preparing, being educated for it, and one day it will be all his own. So we are heirs in our minority, being trained by life's discipline for the full possession of our inalienable Home. 'No one shall snatch them out of My hand.' Precious words! Neither man nor evil spirit shall ever find the Shepherd off His guard. The poor lambs, the helpless sheep, are off their guard continually. Thank God for 'the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls'! Thank God that 'the Keeper of Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps'!

29. *i.e.*, though given to Me, and in My Hand, they are still in My Father's Hand too.

30. Higher and higher Christ rises in His revelation of Himself. Plainer words than these cannot be spoken. Literally, it is, 'I and the Father, *We* are One.' The 'We' shows the distinct Personality of the Father and the Son; the 'One' shows the Unity—two wonderful doctrines in half a dozen words!

31. Just before, they had blamed Him for not speaking plainly; now they would stone Him for doing so.

32. Truly was it said of Him (Acts x. 38) that He 'went about doing good.' No doubt, in turning sickness into health, and sorrow and mourning into gladness, He found one sweet joy in His sad and solitary earthly life—solitary indeed must it have been when His *best* companions were poor, erring disciples, who loved and yet forsook. Even an angel, sent down to dwell with us in human form, would feel very lonely in our midst; for few of our thoughts would be attuned to his.

33. The appointed punishment for blasphemy was stoning (Lev. xxiv. 14-16). It was also the punishment of a rebellious son (Deut. xxi. 18-21). How marvellous the difference between this Mosaic teaching, and the tender welcome of the prodigal son in the parable! We owe it all to Christ—to those weary years He spent on earth, and to His precious death and glorious resurrection. 'Thanks be to God for His unspeakable gift'—the gift of a Saviour! 'Thou, being a man, makest Thyself God.' How plainly they understood what He claimed to be!

34. See Psa. lxxxii. 6 respecting judges or magistrates, God's commissioned agents.

35. 'The Word of God came.' This is the well-known formula by which the Divine commission is expressed (Luke iii. 2). All authority, even that of a parent, is committed, entrusted to us, by God, the Fountain of authority; all other authority is *derived*. Those who obey, and those who rule, should alike remember this. A child, resisting a parent's lawful command, is resisting a power conferred by God. A parent or ruler abusing his power is abusing a special trust from God, for which he will have to give account. 'The Scripture cannot be broken'; *i.e.* set aside as wrong or in error. Many desperate attacks have been made upon it, but still,

'Lord, Thy word abideth.'

36. To the Divinely commissioned, the word of God came; but Christ was sanctified by the Father, and sent into the world. A totally different expression. He was the *Word*. 'Sanctified' here means not *made* holy, for Christ was holy always—the very perfection of holiness—but set apart for some sacred work.

37-39. He appeals to their common sense; they understood, yet sought His death.

40. See John i. 28. Probably Christ had not revisited this part since the beginning of His ministry. He would here be at least two days' journey from Jerusalem. The Baptist's

voice had long been silent—first, during his prison-life ; and then in the hush of death.

41. Though years had passed, John was not forgotten—we never are forgotten by those whom we have been enabled to lead to Jesus. Worldly friendships rarely live ; seldom would they profit us if they did ; but this tie *endures*, and will only strengthen in eternity. Though John did no miracle, his words were remembered, and proved to be *true*.

42. Christ found their hearts prepared by John's teaching ; therefore many of them believed. What a reward for the Baptist's toil and self-sacrifice ! He is reaping it *still*, and for ever. Very likely in most of these cases he did not know that his words had really taken root—perhaps in his lonely dungeon he mourned over his unprofitable service ; but God saw differently. He shows us many of our failures in order to humble us, and deepen our dependence of heart upon Himself. Now and then He gladdens us with a visible immediate success ; but the rest we shall learn in heaven, not all at once even there. But, as the bright years roll on, one blessed spirit after another may come and say, 'Thank God I knew you upon earth !' Oh ! what will it be to hear such words ! God grant we may.

CHAPTER XI.

1. BETHANY, the house of dates, is now known by a name derived from Lazarus—'el Azariyeh.' It is planted with olives, almonds, etc. The other Bethany, supposed to be Bethabara, is on the borders of Peræa (John i. 28). It may be wondered that this grandest of all Christ's miracles, is not mentioned in the three earlier Gospels ; but this may have been to avoid drawing attention to Lazarus, whom the chief priests sought to kill (John xii. 10, 11), because many seeing him believed on Jesus. Tradition says that he lived thirty years after his first death. Mary, the younger, but more distinguished sister, is named first in this verse. . More distinguished in what ?

2. Her costly offering (John xii. 3) is mentioned here by anticipation, to show which of the Maries it was.

3. A most womanly, yet reverential, appeal to the known affection of Christ. Strictly speaking, there is no petition in it. They did not say, 'Lord, come down ere our brother die.' Yet what a cry it is ! what strong pathetic pleading to Christ's tender heart ! what casting of a heavy burden upon Him ! Scripture hardly contains a more true and confiding prayer. They evidently thought, 'No need to ask Him to come ; He surely will if we tell Him our need ; He loves our brother.' They just counted upon His help, as a hurt or frightened child runs to its mother without dictating to her what to do for its relief. The words breathe the holy familiarity that they had enjoyed with Him, yet in the very spirit of adoring reverence ; they laid their care before Him in the simplest words, and left Him to deal with it—*that is prayer*. Trench says, 'Those whom Christ loves are no more exempt than others from their share of earthly trouble and anguish ; rather are they bound over to it more surely.'

4. The words 'this sickness,' etc., seem to have been the message sent back to the sisters, who were longing for His coming—not for any answer. True, it was to be for the glory of God and of His Son ; but alas for Martha and Mary ! the day Christ sent this message (which would be forty-eight hours after the sisters despatched their messenger) was probably the burial-day of Lazarus, who, according to Eastern custom, would doubtless be interred the day he died. What a terrible trial for them to receive these words of hope and assurance two days too late, and no sign of the Lord's coming to their help ! Great faith is *greatly tried* ; weak, trembling faith meets far quicker response. Yet all this sorrow was for the perfecting of their trust in Him. The lapidary bestows his keenest strokes on his most prized jewels.

5. Not for a moment must this be left in doubt ; but the ways of Divine and human love are widely different. Earthly love would have brought the best help it could, and speedily ;

Divine love let the very crisis pass, and then wrought a glorious deliverance—beyond human thought. We see this fully now, that it was not only for the high glory of God, but a mysterious discipline for Lazarus, and the strongest confirmation of the sisters' faith. But how dark and cheerless were those days for *them*! Besides the anguish of bereavement, there was the sting, 'We sent too late—we should have thought of Him earlier'; and the keener sting perhaps of doubt—doubt of His love, His sympathy, His power. We all know the pang that it is if we are disappointed in any one whom we have loved, and trusted, and esteemed; and now, instead of coming, He sent a message, which the event had contradicted ere it reached them; and their best, dearest Friend had for the first time failed them—failed even to understand the case. Ah! they were dark days!

6. 'He abode two days where He was,' at least twenty-five miles off, though He knew all—their loss, their agony of disappointed trust, after their simple, childlike reliance on Him. This has often been His way with His dearest ones. How terribly He tried the faith of Moses, of Abraham, and Joseph, Elijah, and many others, and how glorious the issue when worked out. Abraham received his Isaac; Joseph was made ruler in all the land; Moses, amid the reverent, loving tears of a great nation, took his peaceful journey to the top of Pisgah; and Elijah, whose sorrowful prayer had been, 'Now, O Lord, take away my life' (1 Kings xix. 4), was received up in a chariot of fire. Earth still travails in pain, till the mighty pendulum of the ages reaches the appointed hour for the glorious Second Advent, when faith will be lost in sight.

7. How courteously He speaks, as though to His equals. He was at Bethabara, east of the Jordan.

8. See verse 31 of the preceding chapter. They felt, as we see, that He was going to certain death. True it was, to a death far more lingering and terrible than stoning.

9. This was both the Jewish and the Greek computation, taking an average of winter and summer. Judæa being twenty

degrees south of us, their longest day was much shorter than ours, and their shortest day longer. Christ had now reached His twelfth hour, the last, the most critical of all. What hour have *I* reached? None of us can tell.

10. If we, who might be children of the light, choose darkness, no wonder if we fall. (See John iii. 20.) What else can we expect?

11. 'Our friend Lazarus.' What an honour to be Christ's friend! Are we His friends? If so, we shall be continually thinking of Him, and finding some word to say for Him, or some loving act to do. Anything done to His little ones, His lonely suffering ones, for His sake, is done unto Him. The kind word, the comforting letter, the visit of sympathy to rich or poor, the thoughtful gift procured with some small personal trouble or self-denial, He notes and remembers all. The word 'friend' implies that Lazarus reciprocated Christ's love. 'Sleepeth'; what so healing, so restful, so welcome? The babe sleeps, and often smiles in his rosy slumber, as though the angels talked with him. The child sleeps, wearied with his play, the toy fast in his dimpled hand. The mother sleeps, perhaps with her babe on her arm, waking if it stirs. The toil-worn labourer sleeps, and rises refreshed and strong; those whose work is of the brain, the writer, the lawyer, the statesman, sleep, and the delicate brain tissues, exhausted at night, are renovated in the morning; the sorrowful, the bereaved, they, too, sleep, for all must sleep or *die*. What a boon it is! None but God could have devised such a blessing. But it was a deeper repose that held 'our friend Lazarus.' He was very dear to Christ, so dear that no one else was designated by Him in exactly this way. Abraham was called 'the friend of God,' but not in his lifetime (See 2 Chron. xx. 7, Isa. xli. 8). Sleep is 'death's twin brother,' and 'God giveth His beloved sleep.' Over and over again in the Old Testament we read, 'He slept with his fathers.' An exquisite piece of statuary in Chester cemetery represents a sleeping child, in the natural position she would assume in life, with the words, 'Hush! she sleeps!' No

language could allay the fear of death more tenderly ; and as sleep points to the waking in the morning, so the sleep of death points to the glorious resurrection morn. (See 1 Thess. iv. 14.) Death is a sweet, deep slumber, but not an eternal one. Christ knew of the death of Lazarus, though the message only spoke of sickness. The word cemetery means a *sleeping-place* ; how true, how soothing, how beautiful is the thought ! None of us dread sleep—we court, we woo it.

12, 13. They take Him literally. If Lazarus sleep, he will recover—why then go into Judæa ?

14. 'Lazarus is dead.' What sorrow must have filled their hearts ! What questionings probably arose in their minds as to how He knew !

15. Glad for the confirmation of their faith. It is implied that Lazarus would not have died had Christ been there, not because He could not have resisted the sisters' pleading, but because in the presence of the Prince of life, death could not have reached His friend ; 'no one is ever said to have died in His presence.'

16. Thomas and Didymus both mean 'twin.' Evidently this loving disciple was of a desponding mind, slow to expect good, prone to look for sorrow. We see in John xiv. 5 the same tendency to look at the dark side. Never do that ; the future is sure to be different from what you expect, and it may be brighter. If you are true followers of Christ, you will be permitted to see a thread of gold intersecting the whole web of your life, even when most perplexing ; and where that golden thread shall end, the glories of Paradise begin.

A desponding spirit is an unbelieving spirit. (See John xx. 25.) Yet how truly this disciple *loved* ! you can see this in the words 'Let us also go that we may die with Him.' A braver disciple would have said, 'Let us go that we may protect Him.' It seemed to Thomas that no hope was possible, and that he would rather die with Him than survive Him.

17. 'Four days': two spent in Peræa, two on the journey.

18. Bethany lay east-south-east from Jerusalem ; the short distance enabled many friends to come.

19. 'It is better to go to the house of mourning,' etc. (See Eccles. vii. 2). These friends were richly rewarded for their sympathy by beholding Christ's most wonderful miracle. How important was it that many witnesses should see it, and witnesses not related to the family! How naturally they were drawn thither, by the ordinary usages of the times, and the instinctive feelings of their own hearts! God never uses supernatural means when other means are adequate.

20. Martha went and met Him; how true to her character! while Mary, equally true to hers, sat still in the house; sitting was the attitude of mourners (See Job ii. 8). Perhaps she feared lest, in her intense disappointment at His late arrival, she might utter some word like reproach: or possibly she did not know He was come till Martha returned.

21. Both sisters say this; doubtless they had often said it to each other, and how natural the remark, moreover how *true*! It has been well said that, except those three questions to Peter (John xxi. 15-17), no discipline in the New Testament is so sharp as Christ's delay in coming to the sisters who had trusted Him so thoroughly that they had not even asked Him to come.

22. Energetic characters are usually sanguine, they see the rainbow through the cloud; nay more, they look for it. How many bright gleams we miss even in this life for want of looking out for them! Strive to be energetic; if what you are engaged upon be worth doing at all, do it with your might, relying on One Who is mighty to help; energies that are *used* grow and strengthen. 'Even now;' how touching the words! Nothing directly *asked*, but everything implied. Man's extremity is God's opportunity still.

23. Christ speaks at first in general terms, to draw her out. Few of you know how those words 'our brother' sound, as we stand by some beloved grave which will henceforth be earth's most sacred spot. How strangely it falls on a *mother's* ear to hear that 'it hath pleased Almighty God of His great mercy, to take unto Himself the soul of her dear *brother* departed'!

and whilst her hungry heart says to itself 'my *child*, my child *still*, *always*,' the clods fall upon the coffin, 'earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust.' Look up, be comforted, 'thy brother shall rise again.'

24. Martha readily admits it; it was no new thought to her, but it brought no present comfort. There lay a long dreary stretch of road before her, and no brother's arm to lean upon. Lazarus was not. But in what form do they rise who now sleep in Jesus? We laid them to rest worn out with sickness and disease, lines of pain perhaps on the marble brow; but they will arise in the perfection of the glorified body, the same in identity, but adorned and beautified, never to fade or die. How much *work* we shall be able to do in those bodies that can never grow weary, never weigh down the soul! If work is a great source of happiness to us here, even though it often tires us through and through, and seldom *wholly* realises our aim, what will it be there?

25. How exquisite are those words, especially when falling on the ear of heart-stricken mourners at the opening of the Burial Service! What higher claim to supreme Divinity can there be? See Job's wonderful words (xix. 25-27). Writing to the Thessalonians (1 Thess. iv. 14-18), 1572 years later, St. Paul's words are hardly more beautiful. 'Though he die,' etc. *i.e.* though he must die, yet shall he live again. God's workmanship as regards our soul's casket is so marvellous, that even reason forbids the thought that He will allow it to perish utterly.

26. 'Shall never die'; that is, death shall be swallowed up in life, in victory. In the Greek it literally is, 'shall by no means die for ever.' 'Believest thou this?' As all Christ's miracles needed some faith in the suppliant, He naturally required some expression of Martha's faith before He performed His sublimest miracle.

27. In the ardour of her faith she gives Him *both* titles: 'The Christ,' 'the Son of God.'

28. She called Mary 'secretly'; *i.e.* that she might come

alone, not with the crowd of friends. 'The Master is here'; evidently Christ was well known by that title to these sisters. He is the Master of our time, our talents, our fleeting opportunities for doing or gaining good; the Master of our sorrows, the Master of our lives; let Him be also the Master of our *hearts*. 'Calleth thee.' Yes, He *wanted* her that He might bind up her bruised heart. Lazarus must sleep till *she* came to see him come forth. Some day the Master will come and call for *us*. Shall we be ready?

29. She arose quickly; the glad tidings were new life to her.

30, 31. Jesus waited for her where Martha left Him. The Jews, seeing her go out hastily, followed, thinking she had gone to the grave to weep there, according to Jewish practice some days after the burial. Thus, casually, were witnesses of the coming miracle provided.

32. She uses Martha's words, but her action is more impassioned, she 'fell down at His feet.'

33. It was a repressed inward groan which the sight of so much sorrow caused. What a blessed proof of His real humanity! what a token, too, of His tenderness! And He is as tender *now*. 'In all *our* afflictions He is afflicted' (Isaiah lxiii. 9).

34. The Jews were wont to bury their dead outside the city walls. The laws of Moses as regarded all such matters were in the highest degree sanitary laws. He needed not to ask this question; He had been there, in unseen, yet most real Presence, when the sisters laid their brother, and their last lingering hope for him, in the grave.

35. 'Jesus wept.' Surely St. John, recording this some sixty years afterwards, in these two sublime words, which exactly convey the meaning of the two Greek words, would have us specially mark this verse, the shortest in the New Testament. He afterwards wept over Jerusalem. (See Luke xix. 41.) The Son of God in tears! Again we may see in this short verse Christ's perfect humanity. We read many things

of the angels, but we never read that any of them wept over the lot of those to whom they ministered. We learn, too, Christ's deep sympathy with human woe; though He was just about to remove it. Probably He wept, not only for the immediate grief of those around Him, but for the universal cause of sorrow—man's *sin*.

36. We thank these Jews for their testimony to the tender love that animated His heart; a testimony all the more valuable, because they were not to be classed as Christ's friends, though somewhat favourably disposed.

37. These were more inclined to cavil—to say, 'If, as people affirm, He opened the eyes of a blind man who was a stranger, could He not have warded off death from a friend?' We must never dictate to God, or peril our confidence in Him on His doing exactly what we ask. The miracle to which they referred occurs in John ix. 1-7. That Lazarus could be raised *now* they never imagined.

38. It was, and still is, customary to excavate sepulchres from the solid rock (Gen. xxiii. 19). A stone shut it up at the entrance. This costly grave, the number of condoling visitors, and the rich ointment afterwards used by Mary, show that they were well off.

39. 'Take ye away the stone.' This they *could* do; therefore human hands must do it, though doubtless a work of much labour. Observe what He did Himself, and what He made others do. The Jews never willingly approached a grave within four cubits, far less opened it. Martha therefore gently remonstrated with Him.

40. Christ had not said these very words, but they convey the full meaning of what had just passed. 'The glory of God'; *i.e.* His power and goodness. Faith is again shown to be an indispensable condition. 'Lord, increase *our* faith.' What blessings we lose for want of it!

41. Their part being performed, His begins. His words are a thanksgiving beforehand for an answered prayer, uttered perhaps when He knew of Lazarus' death.

42. Well might He feel this! His audible communing with God was for the assurance of the people around that His miracles were Divine.

43. 'A loud voice': so on the cross (Matt. xxvii. 50). How sublime a command! only second in grandeur to that voice which shall one day raise the dead! *We* shall hear it (John v. 28). With what awe and expectation must the group have gazed on this wondrous sight—the stone removed, the Saviour's word of command thrilling their ears!

44. What a sight for those around! He came forth, no doubt slowly, impeded by the grave-clothes. Observe that Christ's mighty word did not loosen these, though it broke the strong bands of death. The stone must be rolled away, and the grave-clothes loosened by human hands. It is not certain whether the whole body was swathed together, or each limb separately. Probably the napkin went round the forehead, and under the chin, as the Egyptians used to arrange the head-covering of the dead; and the Jews most likely did the same. He came forth, not weak and tottering, but strong and well; yet I think the eager hands trembled that unloosed the grave-clothes.

45. How strange that after this any could have failed to believe! but it is with the heart, as well as the understanding, that men believe (Rom. x. 10). In the raising of Lazarus, and of the widow's son, many spectators were present; and, though only five beheld the raising of Jairus' daughter, many were cognizant of the miracle, who had previously known of her death. See Luke viii. 54. Yet this is only incidentally mentioned in the narratives—not prominently urged as a proof of their veracity.

46. Some, whose understandings were fully convinced of the miracle, were unchanged in heart and conduct.

47. A council of the Pharisees—the Sanhedrim. What do we? or what are we doing? implying the further question, 'What are we to do?' How this fulfils the prophecy in Psa. ii. 2! 'This man doeth,' etc. What a testimony to their

reality! How gladly would they have explained them away, after the fashion of modern scepticism ; but evidently, on their own showing, *that* was impossible ! Every report of good done by Christ stirred them up to fresh diligence in evil.

48. There was no real connection at all between Christ's miracle and the destruction of the Jewish polity. The Romans would not have interfered with a teacher who taught obedience to ruling powers ; and enjoined payment of tribute. Still, this argument, however fallacious, was likely to be popular with the Jews ; so they said, if we let Him alone the popular enthusiasm will bring on a revolution, which will precipitate the Romans upon us. Literally indeed were their fears realised ; but not because they believed in Christ—rather, because, in rejecting and crucifying Him, the measure of their iniquities was full. The Christians alone escaped by flying from the guilty doomed city.

49, 50. God appointed that the high priest should be for life ; but the Romans changed him at their pleasure—often annually. Caiaphas was a bad man ; but there lay in his words a truth far deeper than he meant. He probably only thought of offering up Christ as a propitiation to the Romans, who, as the conduct of Pilate proved, were far from hostile to Him. God so guided his lips that he uttered without knowing it a prediction of deep significance ; all the more so, as spoken by a high priest who hated Him. In the same way God had used wicked Balaam to bless the Israelites.

51, 52. These are the Evangelist's words—not the high priest's. To prophesy sometimes means to speak by Divine impulse—not always to foretell future events. The prediction that Christ should die was soon fulfilled ; but for this grand gathering together in one, we still wait, and hope, and pray. Where it will be, or how, or when, we can no more conjecture than the Israelites could have conjectured how they were to cross the Red Sea without boats.

53. This was the practical result of Christ's mightiest miracle on these hardened men.

54. How could He? unless He wished to die before His time. Ephraim is between Jerusalem and Jericho. In the wood of Ephraim Absalom lost his life, (2 Sam. xviii. 6-9). The name Ephraim means 'fruitful.' At this place St. John's Gospel leaves our Saviour till just before His last passover.

55. To purify themselves from legal uncleanness.

56. He had often been a subject of conversation amongst them; the form of the question implies an expectation that He would come, notwithstanding all perils.

57. This fully explains their doubting; few but Christ would have faced such certain death. He expressly told His disciples to do all they could for their own safety (Matt. x. 23). He, like some great leader of a forlorn hope, braved all, knowing that the most important part of His work was its closing act, His cross and passion. We too may glorify Him in our deaths, by clinging to Him, loving, trusting Him to our last sigh; but meanwhile we must work for Him as long, as well, as faithfully as by His help we can, till He says to us, 'Child, thy work is done, come Home to thy Father Who loves thee.'

CHAPTER XII.

1-9. SEE Matt. xxvi 6-13. Probably this occurred after sunset on the Friday when the Sabbath began.

4. *Which* Simon was unhappy enough to be the traitor's father we cannot tell. How many Simons are mentioned in the New Testament? Judas is also called 'the son of perdition' (xvii. 12). 2 Thess. ii. 3, applies the same title to antichrist. It is striking to notice how clearly in each mention of Judas, some epithet distinguishes him from St. Jude.

9. Crowds hastened to Bethany, not so much to see Jesus as the raised Lazarus.

10, 11. Great was the excitement in Jerusalem, now thronged with those who had come to the Passover, and intense and most natural the desire to see the risen Lazarus, to hear possibly what death is from one who had passed through it,

and what the unseen world is, from one who had gone a little way into it, and then returned. Probably he would only be permitted, or able, to answer questions as to his last earthly consciousness. Most likely a veil was drawn over memory's wonderful mirror as to those four days in Paradise; otherwise his inner life must have been one longing to be at Home again.

12-16. See Matt. xxi. 1-11, Mark xi. 1-10, and Luke xix. 28-40.

13. Palms emblematic of victory. See Rev. vii. 9.

15. See Zech. ix. 9. The Prince of Peace does not ride upon the horse, a warlike animal; He *will* do so another day. See that grand prophecy Rev. xix. 11-14. What a wondrous sight will that be; and *we* shall see it! 'Fear not'; give other instances in which Christ used words like these.

16. They were quite unconscious at the time that they and the other actors in the scene were fulfilling a prophecy, but they learned it to their amazement when the Holy Spirit poured a flood of light upon their minds at the day of Pentecost. How one thing after another must have recurred to them, and been for the first time comprehended! Even with all the blessed light of Scripture *we* see very little; we see even our own lives very dimly, not knowing *why* this or that befalls us. We shall never fully understand our own histories till we read them in the light of eternity, when *all* will be made clear.

17, 18. 'Called Lazarus out,' etc. Yes, that was all; Christ's voice called him and he came. O Jesus call *us* out of the grave of our sins!

19. Listen to this confession of failure; 'we have done nothing as yet, though we have left no stone unturned, what shall we try next?' Even their hard hearts, so long full of enmity to Him, were growing harder and harder still.

20. Greek proselytes who attended the Passover. In 1 Kings viii. 41-43, Solomon prays for the strangers that should come to worship.

21. Philip was one of Christ's first disciples. (See John i. 43-45). Probably at that moment Christ was in that part of

the Temple court which no Gentile proselytes might enter. 'Sir, we would see Jesus,' blessed words ! for *they find* who seek Him. Zacchæus had the same desire, but probably he was simply moved by curiosity ; evidently he only wished in the first instance to see, and not to be seen by Jesus ; Who he doubtless thought would never look for him in the branches of the sycamore. These Greeks had higher thoughts, and deeper feelings, and they took the most open honourable means. These visitors from the west represented at the end of Christ's life, what the wise men from the east represented at its commencement ; the Magi came to the Manger, the Greeks to the Cross. Is it the cry of our hearts 'we would see Jesus' ? Lord *show* Thyself unto *us*.

22. As fellow townsmen of Bethsaida, these two seem to have been drawn to each other, they are generally mentioned together. The Greeks are not named again, but probably they heard the words spoken in the latter half of the chapter. Unquestionably Jesus saw them, and rejoiced in their coming. Will not *you* give Him joy by coming to Him to-day ?

23. These Gentiles from Europe seem to have been regarded as the earnest of the gathering of all nations to Him, and the completion of His glory. He looks beyond the cross to the triumphs that should follow. So we should look continually beyond life's many changes and perturbations, to the Home where grief has no place. May God prepare us for that better land by every event of our earthly history !

24. See 1 Cor. xv. 36. The great doctrine of life springing forth from death is here brightly imaged. A grain *not* dying, not buried in the earth, has no increase—no harvest can be gathered from it. So Christ, had He ascended to heaven without passing through the grave and gate of death, could have reaped no Divine harvest of souls. Even in ordinary and minor things, joy is often the outcome, or product, of sorrow. For instance, reproof and correction are painful, but how blessed are their results, when a wise reprover speaks to an obedient ear !

25. See Luke ix. 24.

26. 'If *any* man,' etc. See how universal this statement is — no exceptions made. If we serve we shall and must follow; and so serving and following here, *we* shall be hereafter where *He* is. What more can we desire? And yet there is more. 'Him will the Father honour.' It struck me as so wonderful that God should ever, even in heaven, honour such poor sinners as we are, that I looked a second time to see if that really could be the word Christ used. 'Him will My Father pardon, receive, comfort, restore — nay, *love*;' we could understand that; but it needs His very own assurance to make it credible that He should *honour* us.*

27. And now, though He had just spoken of the hour in which He should be glorified, a wave of anguish comes upon Him in the thought of all that must intervene. He, as Man, fully shared our shrinking from suffering, whether of mind or body; and most likely the mental anguish in Gethsemane and on Calvary, was up to the full measure that even *He* could bear. Many think that the verse should be punctuated thus: 'What! shall I say "Father, save me from this hour"? when, for this cause, I came to this hour!' Otherwise, it would seem that He first utters, and then retracts a prayer. Still, He may have done this, feeling His way between two dread alternatives. Christ seems to nerve and strengthen Himself by the thought, 'For this cause I came into the world; *this* thing I came to do.' The bitter elements in Christ's sufferings were not bodily; do not think it for a moment. Thousands of His followers have welcomed tortures for His sake; and surely He for their sakes would have borne any physical pain gladly! The mental anguish we cannot fathom, and it was *that* which weighed Him down.

28. This prayer, at all events, and at all times, is a safe one. Is not prayer then always safe? *Submissive* prayer, that leaves all in God's Hand, is safe for ourselves; but we do not know what dangers are averted by a denial; *e.g.* a mother prays

* The Greek word means 'to deem worthy, honour, respect, reverse,' etc.

intensely for her babe's recovery from illness ; but her sun-beam fades out of her darkened home, and she little knows that if left to her blind love, she might have lost him for ever ; but God knew.

29. Those who thought it was an angel were probably Jews.

30. 'Not because *I* need the testimony, but *you* do.'

31. Satan sealed his own doom in the very act of crucifying Christ. He and his followers on earth and in hell, thought, 'Now we shall triumph at last ; the day is almost ours. He will die, and the field will be won.' Christ takes the opposite view, and says, 'Now shall the prince of this world be cast out.' The hour of Christ's death was the hour of His victory ; for by that precious death He redeemed us and all mankind from Satan's bondage. Henceforward, though Satan's victims have, alas ! been many, they have been victims in *voluntary* bonds. None *need* have perished, nor did any perish from Adam's days till the coming of the second Adam, who looked to Him in faith. The pale, exhausted Body, laid in that new sepulchre belonging to Joseph of Arimathea, was a Victor's Body, though hell's legions shouted 'vanquished !' That brief repose in the tomb not only fulfilled prophecy and gave double publicity to His death, but for ever hallowed earth's quiet graves to every Christian heart. Where He went *we* need not shrink from following. Notice the name given to Satan. What a state the world must have been in under such a prince ! History confirms the very worst that can be imagined of its depravity.

32. There are many attractive forces : the attraction of gravitation, of cohesion, etc., and, in a different sense, there is the attractive power of human affection, of strong moral influence, and so on ; but the attractive power of the cross is greater far than all. Looking at Calvary draws us out of self, and earthliness and sin, into a purer, higher life. Take into the very depths of your hearts the thought of Christ's love in dying for *you*, and you will begin to love Him, to live for Him, and some day you will see Him as He is. What is true of

each individually, will one day be true on a wider scale than we realise—in His blessed Second Advent.

33. *i.e.* by being 'lifted up.' The brazen serpent was a type of this.

34. 'Out of the law'; including the prophets as well, and all the Old Testament. (See Psa. lxxxix. 28, 29, Dan. vii. 13, 14.) They ask, 'How can such prophecies consist with a violent death?' 'What sort of Son of Man is this to be?' is what they mean. Strange question to ask Him!

35. How short the time was in which that glorious Light would shine for them! Yet a few days and it would be seemingly quenched in death. They were trifling with their last opportunity; what a solemn thing to do! but if we trifle with *any* opportunity, it may be *our* last.

36. Listen to one closing offer—one final possibility held out to them by Him Whom they were about to lose. 'Sons of light.' There is nothing so pure as rays of sun-light; almost everything else is soiled with earth's dust and smoke. Milton calls the holy angels 'sons of light.'

'Speak ye who best can tell, ye sons of light,
Angels, for ye behold Him, and with songs
And choral symphony, day without night,
Circle His throne rejoicing.'

White and glistening as their unsoiled robes must be, *ours*, washed in the blood of the Lamb, will one day shine like theirs. And now, having uttered this last command and promise, He had to hide Himself from them. There was still work before Him ere His deep, deep anguish—the Holy Sacrament to institute, counsel to be given to His disciples, and His sublimest prayer to offer; and, till all was accomplished, death must not touch Him. Had they there and then carried Him off to Pilate and to Calvary, the blessed ordinance of the Lord's Supper would have been unknown, or have missed some of its deepest significance if instituted after His resurrection.

37. The most priceless opportunities are nothing to a careless, unawakened heart.

38-40. See Isa. vi. 10. St. John does not quote it verbatim,

but rather gives a key to the understanding of it. 'You *will* not?' God says pleadingly to the sinner. 'No; I will not,' is the reply. 'Then you *shall* not,' is God's awful decision. Alas! how many who would shrink from saying, 'I will not' in *words*, say it most effectually in life and conduct! They 'could not,' *because* they 'would not.' What a terrible sequence!

41. Isaiah has been called the Evangelical prophet. Many chapters, especially the fifty-third, read like pages from the Gospels rather than prophecies. The Jews themselves cannot deny that *that* chapter refers to Christ. 'Saw His glory.' See Isa. vi. 1-5. Isaiah says he saw the King, the Lord of hosts, sitting with the seraphim standing about Him. St. John tells us that it was Christ's glory that Isaiah saw; therefore, Christ is 'the King—the Lord of hosts'; or, as the 24th Psalm says, Christ is 'the King of glory.' That Psalm seems an echo of the triumph song that the angels sang when heaven's gates rolled back, that the ascended Saviour might re-enter His Father's House. What a day that must have been in heaven!

42. Amongst them Joseph and Nicodemus. Their faith was weak, and the 'fear of man bringeth a snare'; into that snare these good men fell for a time.

43. For the moment their conduct looked like being ashamed of Jesus; hence this rather severe comment. They came forward nobly to do honour to the dead Christ; but they might have cheered the living Saviour's heart, and did not. It was a golden opportunity lost for ever; it is true, that He gave them a later opportunity, which He nowhere promises to any of us, if we throw away those He gives us to-day. Happier still would they have been had they availed themselves of both, by honouring Him openly in life as well as in death. Christ's soldiers must show their true colours. Whose colours are *you* wearing?

44. This means that He cried with peculiar solemnity. These words were not said at this particular moment, for Jesus

had departed. Verses 44-50 are a sort of supplementary record of some weighty proclamation for which no place had been found before ; and introduced here as a general summary and winding up of His teaching.

45. See John xiv. 9.

46. See John i. 5-9, and iii. 19.

47. See John iii. 17. *This* time He came as a Saviour, not a Judge. The second time He comes to judge, but not to save ; and the terrible 'wrath of the Lamb' (Rev. vi. 16) can be measured only by the deep tenderness of that Saviour's love. Oh, do not slight that love ! Embrace it, and it will embrace *you* to all eternity.

48. Christ's words must save us now, or condemn us hereafter ; there is no possible alternative—one or other *must* happen to each one of us. *Which shall it be ?*

49. See John vii. 16, 17.

50. See Isa. lv. 3.

CHAPTER XIII.

1. 'DEPART out of this world unto the Father': one of the beautiful expressions denoting death. On the very verge of His awful sufferings His thoughts might well have been absorbed in them, and in the preparation to endure them ; but He was far from forgetting His own—He loved them to the end, although He knew that that very night they would leave Him alone in His anguish.

2. The supper was clearly not ended. See verse 26. It may mean that all the preparations were complete, or that the first part of it was concluded. Judas had already agreed with the chief priests to betray Him. See Luke xxii. 3-6.

3. Wondrous preface to the act which was to follow !

4. 'Garments' ; *i.e.* upper garment ; 'girded Himself' ; assuming a servant's garb.

5. No other Evangelist mentions this washing.

6. Peter's loving words find an echo in our hearts. Our language cannot bring out the intensely vivid contrast between

‘Thou’ and ‘my.’ In the Greek it is, ‘Lord, *Thou my* feet washest?’ Each word is emphatic, as in that memorable question ‘betrayest thou the Son of Man with a kiss?’ Peter’s question expresses profound and beautiful astonishment at such unparalleled condescension.

7. Christ utters no rebuke as yet, simply promises that light shall be thrown upon it afterwards. Why did Jesus wash their feet? Surely it was as a practical living example of humility, and loving service. How comforting are the words, ‘What I do,’ etc., as applied to the deep mysteries of the Bible, and the seemingly inexplicable Providences of God. Sometimes things go as we might naturally expect, and men visibly reap as they sowed; uprightness brings peace now as well as at the last, and sin brings shame and sorrow. But there are many apparent exceptions, the hard covetous man grinds the poor and lives to old age, enjoying all he wants, his riches; the swift run swiftly, and yet lose the race; the strong wrestle bravely yet are borne down in the lost battle. Men whose lives are a curse to others, live on, while those who can least be spared, are taken in the midst of their usefulness. Little motherless ones pine, and suffer, and die, because the cherishing hand that took such care of them is still and motionless in the coffin. Sons and daughters whom a mother’s loving tender glance would have deterred from evil, and led onwards to good, grow thoughtless and reckless. All these are mysteries, to which it is a very partial answer to say, ‘God took them because they were ready.’ Let us rest in the assurance that what we know not now we *shall* know hereafter.

8, 9. How like the impetuous Peter! first, Christ should never thus abase Himself; next, He must wash not only his feet, but also his hands and his head. ‘If I wash thee not’ here means the inward cleansing. There is true clinging love in Peter’s words, he seems to say, ‘if that means nearness to Thee let me have it in the highest degree.’

10. This is far clearer in the Greek, and also in the

Revised Version; 'washed' here means bathed; whilst 'to wash his feet' reverts to the Greek word used in verses 5-8. Probably the Apostles had bathed as a preparation for the Paschal solemnity; but their feet would be soiled in walking from the bath. Just as you now see, perhaps for the first time, the meaning of this verse, so shall we see in heaven the meaning of life's dark problems just referred to. The words 'but not all' should have been a stab to Judas.

11. See John vi. 64. This washing of Judas' feet had not purified his black soul, though Christ's own Hands had done it. How then can any *outward* washing cleanse? 'But not all,' is in the Greek 'by *no means* all,' the strongest negative. 'Eleven of you are sincere and true, the twelfth a traitor.'

12. 'Know ye?' etc., *i.e.* its intent, its meaning. We should seek to know God's mind in His dealings towards us.

13. He asked the question to rivet their attention on the answer. 'Master' to teach you, 'Lord' to rule. 'Ye say well, for so I am.' How striking the contrast between the conscious power and dignity thus expressed, and the humble service just performed! Christ's life is full of such contrasts. Mention others. In His life-time they spoke of Him familiarly as the Master; after His ascension they seem more generally to have called Him 'Lord.' (Acts ii. 36. Rom. xiv. 9. 1 Cor. viii. 6).

14. Not literally, after the fashion of haughty Popes and Emperors, but by rendering the very humblest *real* service to each other.

15. 'An example'; our only faultless one. We should dwell on Christ's life as our example, not merely on His death as our redemption. (See 1 Peter ii. 20-23).

16. See Matt. x. 24, this is an oft-repeated saying.

17. Ah! it is not enough to 'know.' Knowledge *unpractised* means utter destruction.

18. Between these two verses 17 and 18 there is a pause, during which the solemn rite of the holy Communion was instituted. Psal. xli. 9 refers both to Judas and Ahithophel,

David's trusted counsellor (2 Sam. xv. 12-31, and xvii. 1-3). Ahithophel is a type of Judas, as his betrayed monarch was of a far greater Prince.

19. It came to pass when they deeply needed such confirmation. We can hardly realise the agony of disappointment that the Apostles, who had given up their all for Him, must have felt during that brief but almost total eclipse of their faith, whilst He lay entombed. Yet He was about to return triumphant to His own dear Home, having secured, by His brief absence from it, an 'abundant entrance' for those who love Him. Oh ! that they had understood !

20. They had received their commission before ; it was repeated now, that they might be assured 'that their office and mission were still the same, though one had proved himself a traitor' (Lonsdale and Hale).

21. The announcement of treachery in verse 18, seems not to have been understood except by Judas, to whom it would be only too clear ; therefore, Christ repeats it in plain terms, showing, doubtless in voice and manner, how He suffered in doing this. He had a tender human heart, that felt the sting of unkindness and betrayal as keenly as we should. 'One of you shall betray Me.' How emphatic the pronouns and the verb !

22. All the four Evangelists describe the deep perplexity and trouble of the faithful eleven. None tell how Judas felt. Matthew alone gives his hypocritical question, asked to keep up appearances a few moments longer: 'Is it I, Rabbi ?' (Matt. xxvi. 25.) It shows what a deep hypocrite he had been, that these true men were ready to suspect themselves rather than Judas. He alone asks, '*Rabbi*, is it I ?' The others had said, '*Lord*, is it I ?' In the Greek, the words are different.

23. *i.e.* reclining just in front of Him ; the post assigned to a favoured friend. It is in no spirit of self-exaltation that John, writing after an interval of sixty years, alludes to himself thus. Christ's love is too priceless to be boasted of, or bestowed in any special measure on one prone to this failing.

There are possessions the very pricelessness of which precludes vaunting. The Queen wears the Kohinoor, but no one ever heard her boast of it.

24, 25. How natural and lifelike this is ! John asks probably in a whisper, certainly in a low voice. Perhaps when they placed themselves at table, Peter's place was just behind Jesus, so that they should *both* be near Him. Evidently the other Apostles were ignorant of what passed.

26. The giving of the sop was a token of kindness amongst the Jews.

27. Doubtless the wretched man had known many inward struggles ; but the accursed money was in his possession, and the feeling that he was detected added strength to the vile temptation. Christ *seemed* to say to Judas, 'That thou doest,' etc. ; but really, perhaps, the words were addressed to Satan, then in full possession of the lost, miserable man. There is nothing *permissive* in them. A martyr or a hero on the scaffold would usually be allowed two or three minutes' silent prayer at the last, and told to give some signal when it was ended ; but does that signal give *permission* to slay him, or excuse his destroyers ? Christ's words were a simple signal that *this* was the hour. Num. xxii. 20 is a similar instance, and also Matt. xxiii. 32.

28. With what astonishing forbearance Christ had screened him to the last, so that he left the room entirely unsuspected except by one or two. Repentance was still possible to him, till he closed the door for ever between himself and Christ. After that, events hurried on with the utmost rapidity ; the awful crime, the torturing remorse, the frantic suicide.

29. How natural these conjectures, since, on the next day, the Passover, there was no buying or selling !

30. Doubtless he went out still carrying the bag, maintaining his hypocrisy to the last. Had he laid it down, the rest could not have supposed he had gone to make purchases. What was it to *him* that the little slender fund which procured subsistence for the Master and His band was taken from them ?

31. These remarkable words, that sound like some jubilant celestial music, show what a painful restraint the traitor's presence had been, and how patiently Christ had endured it. John expressly says, 'When therefore he was gone out.' Christ does not even now expose the traitor, or say whither he was gone, or the eleven would have rushed from the room to overtake him, ere the vile deed was done. Nor does He dwell on His approaching sufferings. At this moment He seems to see only the glory, not the torment, of the cross.

32. 'Glorify'; truly a coruscation of glories plays around the cross. The glory of such a Saviour, such a Sacrifice, such an Atonement, such a victory over Satan, such a Home won for fallen man !

33. 'Little children.' How often the beloved disciple himself uses these tender words—in his first epistle ii. 12, 28, iii. 7, 18, iv. 4, v. 21.

They could not follow Him *then* ; but they shall one day, for these now present are all *His own*.

34. A new commandment, and yet old. (See 1 John iii. 11.) The old commandment has a new and living light upon it, in Christ's matchless love. Before His coming, the conception that the holiest men had of love would be the conception we should form of the sun if we only knew it on short, cloudy winter days. The glory of the cross is as the bright noontide sun some glowing July or August, or some soft, tender June, when every blade and leaflet sparkles and quivers in its glorious light. To see what love is, and how it acts, study carefully 1 Cor. xiii.

35. Truly they were known by their mutual love. It was said by their enemies, 'See how these Christians love one another.' The Pharisees were known by their traditions and their zeal for ritual ; the followers of John Baptist by their fasts and austerities ; the Christians were to be known by their love.

36. Again a question of Peter's meets with only an indirect answer. Peter seems to have discerned that Jesus was indeed

going to leave them. Not 'now,' but 'afterwards,' Peter was to follow his Master. Ah! he had many a lesson to learn in the interval! He followed closely afterwards, even to the very death on the cross. What lessons are *we* learning? what have we *still* to learn? To the Jews Jesus never said, 'Ye shall follow Me afterwards.' No; their roads and His were widely sundered.

37. He is met by the natural question, 'Lord, why cannot I?' etc. Peter perceived that the departure meant death, and said in the warmth of his heart, and in his deep ignorance of his own utter weakness, 'I will lay down my life,' etc. What a vaunt this must have appeared to the humbled sorrowful Peter the very next day! What a lesson to us to distrust ourselves, and to feel that our weakness is really greatest when we think ourselves strong! That is a striking verse in Psa. xxx., in which David, after saying, 'Lord, by Thy favour Thou hast made my mountain to stand strong,' instantly adds, 'Thou didst hide Thy Face, and I was troubled.' Remember your own utter weakness, and Christ's strength. On this side heaven we are never safe—we can never stand alone; on the other side we shall be safe, but I hardly think that even there we shall trust to any reserves of strength of our own. Yet Peter's was not wholly a vaunt; for he one day actually did joyfully lay down life for Christ, and put on immortality. What a wonderful honour he must have felt it!

38. Well might Jesus ask, '*Wilt* thou?' etc.! How mournfully the words must have echoed in Peter's ears as often as he recalled the past! It is common in the East to regulate time by the crowing of the cock—as the midnight cock, and the morning cock (Matt. xxvi. 33-35; Mark xiv. 29-31; Luke xxii. 33, 34).

CHAPTER XIV.

1. 'TROUBLED'; *i.e.* ruffled, or discomposed, like the tossing, fretful sea, which is never at rest. How beautiful are the

words which thus usher in the glorious chapters now beginning! It is as though, in reading the record of Christ's last words to His disciples, we are admitted to the very Holy of Holies. All that His heart had to say to them was compressed into these three chapters—xiv., xv., and xvi. Last words! How precious they are, when spoken by dying *human* lips! how we listen for them! how we treasure them, when those lips are sealed in death! Well, then, may Christ's Church treasure *His* last utterances, spoken at such a solemn moment! How many sad hearts have these words cheered! 'Believe also in Me'; *i.e.* 'believe equally in Me.' At this solemn hour He claims that full equality with God, which only a Divine Being can claim.

2. How comforting are these opening words! How many death-beds have they soothed! How many sorrowing ones, weeping over their dying friends, have been cheered by them! To the thoughtful heathen, in old times, how dark all must have looked! Their dearest was going from them, who should say whither? Thank God for our Bibles, and for this precious verse—this hope full of immortality! 'Many mansions in the Father's House.' How vast it must be! how glorious! Each 'mansion' is specially prepared, and fitted, and adorned for its occupant; we take care of that on earth. How much more will our Father care for His children's abiding Home! 'If it were not so I would have told you'; *i.e.* 'I would tell you so at once; I would not cheat you with false hopes.' 'I go to prepare a place for you.' Yes; He is doing that for *us now*, if we are His. For some of us perhaps the mansion is only just begun; for others it may be half completed. For one or two the painting and the gilding may be already begun; and the angels, whose hands are doing it, may be saying to one another, 'We must finish this soon. The Master's impress on her brow is brightening rapidly; and how dearly she will like her Home!' Let us remember that *we* must be preparing for our Home, or *no* Home will await us. Heaven is a prepared place for a prepared people. Am I preparing? Is

Christ's impress on my forehead plainer now than it was last year ?*

3. 'Come again.' It was a sad parting for the perplexed disciples, who little understood *why* He went. 'Where I am,' etc. Yes, to be *with Him*, that is heaven ; that *alone* would be happiness enough. If we know nothing else but that we shall be with Him, and in His keeping, that is sufficient. But we do know more still ; there will be angel faces waiting for us at the pearly gates—faces

'That we have loved long since, and lost awhile ;'

there will be such enlargement of our own powers and faculties as we cannot imagine now ; there will be blessed work of some kind for us to do, for which we are being gradually fitted ; there will be freedom from sorrow, sin, care, and temptation, in heaven's own blessed *rest*.

4. He had told them so often that they surely might know. See Matt. xvi. 21, and xvii. 22, 23.

5. Peter is not the one to say this—he seldom pleaded ignorance ; it is the easily discouraged Thomas. Do not give way to discouragement ; things all 'work together for good' ; they are timed for us, adjusted to our strength ; even deep trials have a bright side, for God can teach us to say, 'Thy rod comforts me.' But we have usually had sharp strokes ere we can understand *that*. I first understood it many years ago ; and it was as if an angel's hand had laid, on my bruised heart, a leaf from that tree which stands by 'the river of water of life,' whose 'leaves are for the healing of the nations.' What must its *fruit* be ?

6. 'The Way' : the only way to the Father. See Heb. x.

* On the Sunday on which these verses came in the regular course, dear Fanny W—— sat beside me, her childlike, thoughtful, earnest face, bearing that sweet impress. How little we knew that *her* bright Home was almost ready ! A few months passed, partly spent in the Isle of Wight ; her gentle cheerful patience, and her hopeful way of making the best of everything, must have made her seem far less ill than she really was, for little alarm was felt till one January morning she laid her head on her widowed mother's bosom, and passed without a struggle to the everlasting spring, the golden summer, of a fairer clime than ours.

19, 20. 'The Truth': not simply *true*, but the very essence and fount of truth. If we know Jesus as our Prince and Saviour, we know, or we shall certainly be taught, all necessary truth; *i.e.* all truth necessary to our salvation. There are truths which we shall go on learning for ever and ever; but He is *the* Truth—He is also the Life. Is Christ *my* life? If so, we love Him, we trust Him, we work for Him, we live for Him, and by Him; and we shall go Home to Him, when He calls us, to live *with* Him for ever. In many respects, the life in heaven differs wholly from the life on earth, for all its conditions are different; but, in other respects, it is a *continuation* of what must begin *here*. The opening chords of heaven's glorious harmonies must sound in our hearts here, or we shall never hear them yonder. Even very little children often give clear evidence of God's teaching ere they go to Him. What evidence are *we* showing?

7. See John viii. 19. 'From henceforth ye know Him,' etc.; *i.e.* 'after My resurrection ye shall know His plan of salvation. Ye have seen His image in His Son.'

8. Surely it might well 'suffice' them to have seen Jesus.

9. Philip had been one of the first called, and he and Nathanael had seen the proof of Christ's omniscience recorded in John i. 48-51.

10. See John x. 38.

11. Christ had given abundant evidence of all kinds that He was both what He appeared to be, *viz.* the Son of Man; and also what He claimed to be, the Son of God. Mention proofs.

12. Christ's miracles were chiefly miracles of mercy on men's bodies; but those which He wrought after His ascension through His Apostles were chiefly on men's souls. (See Acts ii. 41).

13. Some commentators think that verse 12 should end at the word 'do,' and verse 13 begin thus: 'And because I go unto the Father, whatsoever ye shall ask,' etc. Hitherto He had been during His earthly sojourn a Prince in exile, in

poverty, in humble guise, a homeless, wayworn traveller. Now He was returning to His Father's palace, His exile ended, His weary journey done. (Matt. xxi 22, Mark xi 24, Luke xi 9.)

14. An emphatic repetition of the former verse. Remember, however, that our wills and our prayers must be in conformity to God's will. We are not to expect Him to give all we *think* we want, or we should find ourselves in sore difficulties. Our *real* needs He does supply in ways most unexpected. A poor old woman in Carlisle, past work of any kind, lived on the charity of four ladies, who each allowed her sixpence a week; one shilling paid the rent of the room, with the other she generally managed to provide fuel and food. You can imagine how little of either she had! One day, however, she had nothing, not a penny, not a crust; she knelt down to tell her trouble to God; and then went out. At the first turning she met her former clergyman, who had left the neighbourhood and come over for the day. Quite unasked he gave her a shilling; happy man to be God's almoner! A lady living a long way from Carlisle, hearing this pathetic little story from a resident there, volunteered a weekly sixpence, on which slender addition to her income the poor woman 'lived in comfort' she said, to the end of her days. Oh! how easily may each one of you brighten another's life, if you will learn to think for others, to *consider* the poor!

15. Obedience is the test of love. A wilfully disobedient child may suppose he loves his parents, but it is not true love. (See 1 John v. 3, and 2 John 6.)

16. A mediator does not *necessarily* imply guilt, an Intercessor does, Christ is both; a Mediator between two parties, God and man; an Intercessor because man is deeply guilty (See also 1 John ii. 1). What can He find to say for us? Simply *nothing* as regards what we are; *everything* when He speaks of Calvary and says, 'Father, this weak sinful child is Mine, I have redeemed him, forget not what his ransom cost Thy Son.' 'Another Comforter'! only St. John uses this expres-

sion. Mention some Old Testament promises of comfort : 'be with you for ever.' Christ's stay with them was very brief ; *this* Divine Friend never leaves us till time is swallowed up in eternity, nor even then.

17. 'Abideth,' in the present, as though already they had the earnest of this great blessing.

18. 'Desolate,' *i.e.* orphans. His departure was to be no bereavement, because One was coming Who would supply Christ's own place. Doubtless they understood it but dimly, or they would have thought it quite impossible that the Master's place could ever be really filled again. God has resources that we cannot even conjecture.

19. His bodily presence was all that the world had ever had of Him ; but His real presence would continue with His disciples, through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. 'Because I live,' not *shall* live again after My resurrection ; live on *through* death. So too shall *we*. Death is a thick veil impenetrable to survivors ; but it really *destroys* nothing ; not even the body. If you shiver a glass dish into atoms, you have destroyed it ; but the body, slowly turning to dust, retains an unseen mysterious vitality, some hidden germ that *cannot* perish, something over which God watches.

20. This refers to the wondrous illumination of their minds after the descent of the Holy Spirit. Hitherto they had seen things, even things most closely connected with their dear Lord, through a glass darkly ; soon they would begin to understand Him, His oneness with the Father, and their union with Him.

21. Observe the two verbs 'hath,' and 'keepeth.' We *have* His commandments undoubtedly, but do we *keep* them ? If not, our doom will be that of the servant who knew his Lord's will and disobeyed it.

22. Notice the careful parenthesis 'not Iscariot' ; the traitor had gone from them for ever, except for one last awful meeting in the act of betrayal ; we know too that Iscariot never seems to have asked a single question except the treacherous

'is it I?' or entered into anything affecting his Master, save the poor pittance in the bag, and chances of adding to it. Yet though no mistake could have arisen, John's love for his fellow Apostle, Jude, the brother of James, holds up this shield to ward off the mere possibility of the true man being deemed the traitor.

23. *i.e.* by the Spirit's indwelling the soul will know God as a Father (See 1 Cor. iii. 16, 2 Cor. vi. 16). What a marvellous word that 'We' is here!

24. A repetition of former teachings.

25. Present for how short a time! This was His very last discourse!

26. Olshausen beautifully says, His office is 'bringing to living consciousness what lay like slumbering gems in their minds.'

27. A note of farewell. How much meaning it conveys! Even our ordinary 'Adieu—good-bye,' has deeper meaning than we often think. 'Good-bye' is 'God be with you'; 'Adieu' has a kindred meaning. Peace is Christ's legacy. He is our peace—the Prince of peace. Many a legacy is bequeathed, but never paid. The testator has spent the money, or left debts behind him, or there is a flaw in the will, or a law-suit swallows up all. But Christ is the Executor of His own will; He *gives* His legacy! How does the world give? It gives grudgingly, or deceitfully, or fitfully and capriciously, or hoping for something again. The world gives to those who can *give*, not to those who need. 'Let not your heart be troubled'; the same sweet strain as in verse 1.

28. 'Rejoice,' because He would gain His own Home once more, and His Father's smile and presence. He was One with the Father in glory, but now He had made Himself of no reputation—taken the form of a servant.

29. How it would strengthen them later on, to say to each other, 'It is all true; He foretold all this while He was with us.'

30. Find other names for Satan. (See Rev. xii. 7-9.) He was

coming for the grand final attack. 'Hath nothing in Me.' No single 'point d'appui' on which temptation should find lodgment. Ah! how much Satan has, even in the very best of us! We have a corrupt nature, pride, vanity, worldliness, selfishness, sloth, self-indulgence, all kinds of vantage-ground for him. Truly, it is only because Christ is mightier than he, that any of us ever escape.

31. Some think that 'Arise,' etc., merely means that they rose from table, or that they left the room, and that Christ ended the discourse on His way to the garden. Others again think that 'Arise,' etc., was an expression of His ardent longing to have the great work accomplished, but not meant to break up the solemn gathering just at that moment.

CHAPTER XV.

1. SEE 1 Cor. iii. 9. The husbandman does many things to the trees of which they might well, if they could, ask the reason. They simply *wait*; and in due season the ripe clusters weigh down the branches, and men say what a splendid gathering there will be!

2. Some branches yield leaves only, and the gardener cuts them off. The tree might say, 'Why cut off that beautiful bough?' Ah! there is a reason for it: the sap must not be wasted on a barren branch. Even the fruitful branches must be pruned, that they may yield more and better fruit. This is the key to one of life's enigmas, the keen strokes with which God smites His dearest children; it is the sharp knife pruning the fruitful branch. No need to prune the barren ones; cut them down; what trouble would *they* repay? True, the pruning hurts—oh! *how* it hurts!—but it is well worth while to bear it.

3. 'Clean'; *i.e.* pruned. Christ's years of patient teaching had gently and imperceptibly trained them as the lessons of sorrow are the means of training us. (See Mal. iii. 2, 3.)

4. A Christian *out* of Christ, can no more bear fruit than a bough lopped from the tree last winter can yield this year's

fruit. It is not enough to put away sin, if that were possible we must daily and hourly *live* upon Christ.

5. 'Apart from Me, ye can do nothing.' Remember this do not for one moment trust to yourselves, or your own good resolutions. Do not you *always* fail when you forget to lean on Christ? I am sure *I* do. See that you *abide* in Christ. Noah's carpenters must have entered the ark many times, but they did not abide in it, and so they perished.

6. The vine answers two purposes—*fruit-bearing*, and if *the* fails, *fuel*. The Romans were thus threatened (Rom. xi. 19-22)

7. 'Ask what ye will,' etc.; because their asking would be in harmony with God's will. Prayers are fruits of faith, and they produce more fruit.

8. Because He delights in the working of His own grace *much* fruit, *well-ripened*. To be well-ripened there must be plenty of sun; so the advanced Christian knows most of the Sun of Righteousness. 'Much fruit,' brings glory to God before men (Matt. v. 16; 1 Peter ii. 12). Most of us, alas! live *dwarfed* lives; not barren, but not rich in results; we do some thing for God, and for men for His sake; but we could do more, we could live fuller, richer, happier lives if we did but abide in Christ more closely. The parable of the ten pound (Luke xix. 13-19), is full of lessons for us. He who had made his pound into five pounds, (far more than we do), had not the precious praise bestowed on the servant who had turned his pound into ten, and the latter would have to all Eternity double reward. Dear, dear girls, you are young, and by God's help might make your lives almost sublime, if you would but begin *now*, and go on in Christ's strength to the blessed end go on in humility and prayer, and earnest *work*.

9. What immeasurable love is this! Continue in the possession and enjoyment of My love.

10. May we be disciples whom Jesus loves.

11. 'My joy' in you, as 'the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride,' (Isa. lxii. 5). How wonderful this is! that He should pity, pardon, receive us, we might conceive; but *love, delight*

in, who could dare believe it, were it not His own word that tells us so ? 'that your joy (in Me) may be full.'

12. See John xiii. 34. Alas ! we sometimes find it difficult even to bear with one another.

13. There have been a few grand instances of this in the world's history, beside the heroic deeds sometimes performed in battle. There was the faithful slave bringing home his master's two little children ; who, when the ship was sinking was told that he or they must be left behind, and instantly put the children into the boat and perished. More courageous still was the Russian coachman, who, when the carriage was surrounded by wolves that could be kept off no longer, threw himself among them whilst his master and the family escaped. Greater perhaps even than these was the physician, who, when his city was desolated with the plague, exposed himself to it in its most fatal form, that he might, if possible, ascertain its nature so that others might find a cure. With his dying hand, for he took it, as he knew he must, he wrote sheet after sheet, throwing them into a vessel full of vinegar, that they might be safely touched when he was gone. Ah ! what nobleness there is in some hearts, where Christ rules, and the Holy Spirit dwells ! Why are *we* so different ? Never forget that Christ died for His enemies, praying for them as they nailed Him to the cross.

14. Here again we have the practical lesson of former verses. We must hold ourselves and our earthly all, absolutely at Christ's disposal, to leave us our blessings, or to take them one by one as He sees best. Is there anything of which we feel in our secret heart, 'I *could* not give up that' ? Then *that* is your idol—beware ; 'the idols He will utterly abolish.' (Isa. ii. 18).

15. Not *merely* servants, but friends. A servant, after long years of faithful service, often becomes a friend as well as a servant ; and is trusted in family troubles as few friends would be.

16. 'Your fruit should abide,' *i.e.* be imperishable.

17. See verse 35 of chapter xiii.

18. See Matt. x. 25. How often these words would encourage them in the hard path they were to tread! The wicked have ever hated the good, because their piety was a continual reproach. The world hated Christ and His truest, noblest, followers.

19. If as you grow up, you find that the worldly flatter and make much of you, it will be a bad sign for your soul-health and your prospects for eternity.

20. See Luke xii. 49-53. How can He both send fire and give peace? The fire of outward tribulation cannot reach the *heart-peace* that Christ gives.

21. They would be hated for their Master's sake more than for their own (1 Peter iv. 12-14).

22. They would have been innocent of the crowning sin of rejecting their Messiah. In this, like the Amorites, they filled up the measure of their iniquities. Awful measure! as if God's long-suffering waited till the very last moment possible. It reminds one of that solemn word Tekel (Dan. v. 27). God does not punish in sudden wrath as men often do; the iniquities are *measured*, the sinner *weighed* in the balances. No lost soul will ever feel *unjustly* punished; 'no excuse for their sin.' We are fond of excusing our sins under plausible names; avarice is called 'duty to a man's family'; pride is 'self-respect'; stinginess, 'economy.' The hour of death strips off these flimsy devices, and then it is *too late*.

23. It was not indifference, not simple careless rejection—it was active hatred, the hostility of sin to holiness. Mention the first instance of that. (Gen. iv. 3-8).

24, 25. 'Works,' etc. John vii. 31.; 'hated' (Psa. lxix. 4, Psa. xxxv. 19).

26. See John xiv. 16, 17.

27. In bearing witness to their Master they passed all their remaining days; it was the work for which they lived and died. Luke i. 2 refers to their having been eyewitnesses from the beginning. It is full of interest to notice in the Acts and

Epistles and the Revelation how much more they had gained, from their constant association with Him, than we should have known from the history in the Gospels. The descent of the Spirit brought out what lay buried.

CHAPTER XVI.

1. Matt. xi. 6, xiii. 21. We tread no smooth, easy, beaten path to heaven ; but when we get there, oh ! what rich amends !

2. See John ix. 22. 'Killeth you.' How soon fulfilled in Stephen's case ! (Acts vii. 59, 60). Only hardened hearts and seared consciences thus reason, and thus delude themselves ; and every stage of the hardening and searing is their own act—their own sin. Nothing less than a wondrous vision of the Saviour arrested the persecutor Saul ; and, to the very last, he humbled himself for it (1 Cor. xv. 9). Prov. xiv. 12 shows how far wrong we may go without knowing it. 'Hold up my goings in Thy paths, that my footsteps slip not,' is a prayer we should use daily.

3. Hitherto He Himself had borne their chief hatred ; but, when He was far beyond its reach, it would fall upon His disciples.

4. Christ had told them already (see Luke vi. 22) ; but not in such definite words as in verse 2. He was with them then, their Protector, the Prince of Life, in Whose presence none could kill them. He would have them know from the outset that they must follow Him through much tribulation ; but it was time enough to know exactly how great things they must suffer for Him, when they knew how much greater things He did and suffered for *them*, and how matchless is His power to sustain ! Very likely Paul, the aged, never took so joyful a walk in his life as when he went to his execution beyond the gates of Rome.

5. They had asked in a certain way (John xiii. 36, and xiv. 5), but He wanted more eager intelligent inquiry.

6. Sorrow had paralyzed them ; He would now rouse them.

Much would depend on them in the future ; their energies must awake.

7. How natural are those lines of Keble !—

‘ My Saviour, can it ever be,
That I should gain by losing Thee ?’

As the high priest had to enter within the veil, so was it needful for us that our High Priest should pass into the heavens (Heb. iv. 14), where He ever liveth to make intercession for us.

8. Conviction implies guilt, and includes reproof ; but reproof does not include conviction.

9. All sin has its root in unbelief. The fatal seed of unbelief, planted in Eve's heart, was the beginning of man's first disobedience. See Gen. iii. 1-6. Had she continued to believe that God saw and would punish, she would never have disobeyed His command. We commonly say that disobedience was her first sin ; but, in truth, unbelief preceded it.

10. Undoubtedly Christ's going to His Father was the most convincing proof possible of His righteousness, and of His being what He claimed to be. Else God would neither have raised Him from the dead, nor permitted Him visibly to ascend into heaven.

11. Various meanings have been assigned to this. Some refer it to the grand victory that Christ, by dying, obtained over Satan ; and probably this is the true interpretation, though his final judgment yet awaits him.

12. Christ was sowing seed in their hearts, which the Spirit would bring to perfection.

13. Oh ! to be guided into all truth by the Spirit of Truth Himself ! That word ‘ guide ’ is full of meaning—we are not compelled, or violently urged ; but the teachable and childlike are gently led by One Who knows every step of the way. O, Holy Spirit, lead *us* in the way that we must go ! *Ask* for more of His help, and you will *certainly* have it. The promise, in Luke xi. 13, is an *absolute* promise, contingent only upon our asking. He would explain to them the past, guide them

in the present, and give them marvellous glimpses into the future, for which we are yet waiting. Most of our insight into it comes from the Epistles and the Revelation. In the last especially we seem to stand at one of the doors in our Father's House, and to catch, as it opens for a moment to admit some ransomed soul, an echo of unearthly music, a fragrance as of flowers that never bloomed on earth, or the passing gleam of white glistening robes. Happy for us who *know* that our own lost treasures are *there*, wearing the spotless robes, swelling the glorious harmony, drinking in unimaginable joys! Happy, too, are we if we can say, 'I, too, am *going Home*!'

14. It is the Spirit's great work and office to reveal Christ to us as our own all-atoning, all-sufficient Saviour; to enable our hearts to lay hold upon Him and say, 'He is mine'—'He loved *me*, and gave Himself for *me*.'

15. We have here a wonderful glimpse into what the Father, Son, and Spirit are to each other. One God, yet how distinctly Three Persons! We cannot grasp it, but our own complex nature, body, soul, and spirit, gives some clue. There is the body, with all its various wants, which are common to animals as well as to us; then, going a step higher, we see, in many animals—a faithful, intelligent dog, for instance—higher faculties than he would possess had he *only* a body; he remembers, he reasons, he distinguishes one object or person from another—to some extent he understands the language of his country, whatever tongue is spoken. He has therefore two natures, and *we* have a third, one which cannot perish through all eternity.

16. 'Ye behold Me no more'; because He would be resting in the grave. 'Ye shall see Me'; during the forty days preceding His ascension.

17, 18. How natural this perplexity! Dimly it had dawned upon them that He was about to die; but, as yet, they failed to grasp the blessed facts of the resurrection—of His brief sojourn after it, and of His glorious ascension; yet all this would be accomplished during the next six weeks (Acts i. 3-9).

19. Perhaps this should not be put in the form of a question as He certainly knew what was passing in their minds ; it may rather mean, 'You are inquiring,' etc. ; this is borne out by verse 30.

20. The enemies of Christ would triumph in His death, as they say, '*Now* we have put Him down at last' ! but their joy would be brief ; His disciples would mourn, but their sorrow would be 'turned into joy' after His resurrection. The enemies had small reason to rejoice, but *they* had deep cause for joy. Their heaviness endured two brief nights, and on the Easter morning joy came, so great as to be perfectly bewildering, received with incredulity as too good to be true. 'Turned into joy' ; how much more than merely 'comforted' by God's overflowing bounty often does this for us still, even in temporal things, and especially when He turns sorrow for sin into the blessed sense of pardon and peace. There is doubtless also a reference here to the triumphant gladness of the redeemed at Christ's Second Advent. Shall *we* share it ?

21. He gives this as a familiar instance of sorrow transformed into exquisite happiness.

22. The resurrection should be so fully proved to them, by sight, by touch, and hearing, and many other tokens, that no doubt of it should ever again cross their minds. 'Taken from you.' Earthly joys may easily be taken away, even the purest, sweetest joy of a mother in her child ; the child suffer the mother's heart aches for it ; perhaps the little one grows up cold and careless, a deep sorrow to her ; or her darling gathered early to the Father's Home, and the crown of her life happiness is placed beyond her reach. The 'joy' here means no man can give, and no man can intermeddle with it.

23. 'Ask Me nothing,' by reason of the fulness of the Spirit's teaching. Hitherto they had come to Him with many a question and difficulty ; doubtless they came continually ; but this was ending now. How often they must have said later on, 'I wish I had asked Him this or that' !

24. Whilst He dwelt with them He had not taught them the

ask in His name, which accounts for the omission of it in the Lord's prayer. When He was glorified, they were to ask in His name.

25. 'In proverbs,' or obscurely; 'the hour cometh,' *i.e.* during the forty days after His resurrection.

26, 27. This does not mean that He will not intercede for us, for He ever liveth to make such intercession (Heb. vii. 25), but that He will pray to a *loving, willing* ear; 'the Father Himself loveth you' on account of your love to Me. Faith in Christ is *dear* to God, and without such faith it is impossible to please Him (Heb. xi. 6).

28. This echo of what He had just said seems like self-communing, as though He loved to dwell upon it. 'I came out,' etc. Here is His Divine origin. 'I came into the world' by My incarnation. 'I leave the world' by My death. 'I go unto the Father' by My ascension. These words contain a summary of the Gospel.

29. What had perplexed them was verse 16: His departure, His return, His final going away. This He had now explained; at least sufficiently for these willing anxious learners to catch a glimpse of His meaning. Very touching is their eagerness to grasp it.

30. *i.e.* believe more firmly; they had believed before.

31. As if to say, 'Do you believe?' 'Well, if you do.' There almost seems a delicate irony in this, read in the light of what immediately followed.

32. Here He gives one more warning of what they little knew that they were about to do. As if to remind them how sorely they would be tested that very night, He says, 'The hour cometh, yea, is come,' 'Leave Me alone'; what a deep sense of wrong breathes in these sorrowful words! Yet 'not alone' till in the bitterest hour of all, He cried: 'My God, My God, why hast *Thou* forsaken Me?' *Was* He alone then? Never, in reality, but to His own consciousness it seemed that the thick black cloud of man's sins had hidden the Father from Him. He was to bear even *this* for us, and to utter the saddest, most

pathetic wail that intolerable anguish ever forced from human lips.

33. In these words He winds up His very last discourse. 'On earth, peace,' was the angels' song at His birth, and now, just before His betrayal and death, He bequeathes His legacy of peace. He has overcome the world before us, *in us and for us*, if we are His indeed. Blessed Saviour, amidst earth's turmoils and partings and tribulations, '*grant us Thy peace.*' Amen.

CHAPTER XVII.

1. 'LIFTED up His eyes'; expressive of hope. *Psa. cxxiii. 1*, 'Lift thine eyes,' etc. We lose much by looking down upon our troubles, instead of straight up to God, *our Father*. John seldom depicts Christ's looks and gestures, but this was an occasion which left an indelible impression. What a privilege to hear this sublimest prayer!

2. '*Give eternal life.*' How precious a gift! How it sweetens life, and brightens a dying hour (that hour which we must all see), to know that eternal life in heaven is won for us by Christ's atoning death!

3. We must know God here as our Friend, our Father, or we shall never know Him as anything but our awful Judge. (See *Job xxii. 21.*) What is it to *know* anyone? Surely it is to know something of their character, their life, their inner mind, their feelings towards us. To know God fully is impossible to any but Christ and the Holy Spirit; but we may know much of what He is, and more of His love to us; and that knowledge is the soul's true joy. We may, even on earth, know Him in the sense and degree in which a babe of a few months old knows its mother if she has given it much of her own care and tending. The babe knows nothing of the mother's inner life, but it understands her care, her love, and how safe it is in her arms; it notices whether she smiles or weeps, is distressed at her tears, and smiles back her gladness and her fond affection. Its delight is to be with her, in her sight. Are we such loving children to our Father in heaven? If so, be sure your love is

sweet to Him, is dear to Him. No child grown to manhood or womanhood can give fuller, more precious tokens of love than babes give. Their love is the first instalment of the mother's 'wages.'

4. Only He could say this. None of us *finish* our work, though death ends it. A finished work means one that is really accomplished, not one that has merely ended. Of John Baptist it is said in somewhat similar words, 'John was fulfilling his course' (Acts xiii. 25). Am *I* fulfilling mine?

5. The shame and humiliation of the cross would end ere another sunset, and God would glorify Him with that unspeakable glory which He had left for awhile, after enjoying it through all eternity past. May it not be that Calvary, so dark on the awful crucifixion day, has shed on that once thorn crowned brow its brightest lustre? 'Perfect through sufferings' is inscribed on all the noblest lives of Christian men. If ever any human life reaches its best and fullest development, is it not through some special sorrow? Even little babes whom God takes home in infancy have often weary, joyless lives during their short existence; and they would not suffer the mystery of pain but for some ultimate gain to themselves.

6. They had known God's Name always; but in Scripture, to know His Name means to know somewhat of His character, His nature. (See Psa. ix. 10, and Prov. xviii. 10.) Is His Name dear to you?

7. All is of God, food for body and mind, good gifts of every kind. It is sweet and profitable to trace them to Him, not to take them as matters of course. John Baptist taught this. (See John iii. 27.) In a different way Solomon expresses the same thing in reference to the glorious Temple just finished at such cost (1 Chron. xxix. 14). Yes, we can but give Him of His own; our money, our brain-work, our strength to toil, all is His, not ours. It is a terrible mistake when we think, 'This talent, this possession, is *mine*.' No; we are only stewards of God's manifold gifts. Whatever we may do, let us never think, 'Is not this great Babylon, that *I* have built?'

8. See John xvi. 30, 31. It was well that they should know surely the truths which He left in charge to them, and for which truths all but one of them would die.

9. 'I pray for them.' Oh! blessed, all-prevailing Intercessor! Yet even Christ's intercession might seem unanswered when that very night 'all forsook Him and fled.' Had an immediate answer been granted, every one of them would have pressed close to Him as He stood before His judges; Peter would not have denied Him; all would have been faithful and true. What a consolation to the Saviour Himself would their fidelity, even their loving, sorrowful looks, have afforded! But no; *they* were left awhile to learn their utter weakness. *He* must 'tread the winepress alone' (Isa. lxiii. 3), not only in His Second Advent, but in the long, sad hours that closed His earthly sojourn.

10. How strong a claim to absolute equality! Is He glorified in *me*? Am I His epistle, known and read of all men? (2 Cor. iii. 2).

11. He looks, as we all must (if we would find peace and joy amidst earth's turmoil), beyond the 'grave and gate of death.' He speaks as one who had already passed the barrier between two worlds. 'But these are in the world,' exposed to all its snares, left behind whilst '*I* come to Thee.' 'Holy Father,' the only time He uses this expression. He appeals to His Father's holiness to keep them in an unholy world 'unspotted' (James i. 27). Christ was asking a great petition, but He asked it from One mighty to save and help.

12. Another reference to God's *Name*. How dare *we* utter it thoughtlessly in careless prayer, when *He* so revered it? The 'son of perdition,' another of the traitor's terrible names. The man of sin, spoken of 2 Thess ii. 3-10, is also called the 'son of perdition.' Who *he* is we cannot even conjecture.

13. 'Now come I to Thee.' Yes, He had run with patience the race set before Him, and it was all but ended. When *we* finish *our* course, no more blessed words can fall from our dying lips than these, 'Father, I come to Thee.' Oh! that we may

so live that those who have watched our last fluttering breath may have no misgivings about us!

14. The world's hatred should be rather a source of joy (Matt. v. 10-12).

15. No; for they had a glorious work to do on earth, which they could not do in heaven. 'Keep them from the Evil One,' and all earth's wickedness.

16. John xv. 18, 19.

17. As the prayer 'keep them,' etc., was negative, so 'sanctify' is positive. 'Thy Word is truth.' He says, '*I am the Truth.*' What an insight Pilate might have gained had he but waited for an answer to his own important question—'What is truth?' Even in everyday matters, if the truth cannot help us, nothing can.

18. Here is their Divine commission, once more repeated in Christ's solemn parting charge (Matt. xxviii. 19, 20).

19. 'I sanctify Myself'; i.e. consecrate Myself; that they may be both consecrated and made holy. A consecrated vessel is a vessel set apart to a holy use—like those Belshazzar profanely used; it is not in *itself* holy. Christ was both holy and consecrated. His Apostles, whom He was consecrating to their hallowed work, must be made personally holy. Are *we* vessels 'meet for the Master's use'? (2 Tim. ii. 21). How can we be made meet?

20. What a comfort for *us* to know that *we*, too, were thought of and remembered in that last prayer! for *we* believe on Him through their word handed down to us. 'Believe on *Me* through their word': not believe in the Church, or the Pope, or the Virgin, or any body of Christians whatever, but for them 'which believe on *Me*.'

21. i.e. knit up into a living unity amongst themselves, and into a higher unity with the Godhead. The illuminating transforming influences of the Spirit shall in time force conviction on the world. The many differences of opinion amongst us, and the bitterness with which people differ, weaken the impression that religion makes on the world, and drive many to infidelity.

22. 'The glory which Thou hast given Me.' Here Christ speaks of what He surely *would* do for them. He, Who sees all time in one glance, and to Whom a thousand years are but as one day, may well speak thus (Psa. xc. 4; 2 Peter iii. 8). What that glory will be we know not; but we shall be satisfied *then*—every longing fulfilled, 'all raptures through and through.' This verse also refers to the glory of an indwelling Spirit—of a holy character; and *this* they were to enjoy on earth.

23. The loving unity of Christ's disciples is the thing to convince men that He sent them, and that He was God, and came from God.

24. What words of majesty! Even to *behold* His glory would be a blessed privilege and honour; but His people will not only be glad spectators, they will share the glory on which their ravished eyes gaze. 1 Cor. ii. 9 takes us as near to it as we can attain on earth. What a day it will be when we get there! Truly to be with Jesus is *far* better; but a faithful servant will gladly do his Master's work as long as he can; and, by doing it, he enlarges his future capacity for happiness, which will greatly vary according to what we *are*.

25. The Apostles did at least fully and surely know this great central truth, though ignorant still on many points. What is a central truth?

26. God's 'Name' again in these last words of this sublime prayer. Hardly have the last utterances ceased ere He passes with His disciples over the brook Kedron to Gethsemane, and the bitter conflict draws on.

CHAPTER XVIII.

1. ONLY John mentions it as a garden. The agony that holy garden witnessed is told by the other three Evangelists, and therefore omitted by John, who wrote to supplement their Gospels. (See Matt. xxvi. 36-46.) His agony would have been too terrible for the 'upper room,' just hallowed by the first Communion; and in the garden He could withdraw Himself first from eight, then from three of the disciples.

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12. 'Bound Him.' His first indignity at their hands. How little this willing Victim needed bonds !

13. See on Matt. xxvi. 57.

14. See John xi. 49.

15-18. Peter's following afar off. (See Matt. xxvi. 58, Mark xiv. 54, and Luke xxii. 54.) It is noticeable how John avoids mentioning his own name ; here he calls himself 'that disciple who was known to the high-priest.'

15. John entered as a privileged acquaintance, and secured admission for Peter, who meanwhile waited at the door. The trial was probably held in a room open to the court, but on a higher level.

19-24. Only John gives this dialogue, which took place probably about 2 a.m.

19. Evidently Jesus and His disciples were supposed to form some secret party. Caiaphas hoped to entrap Him into some statements that could injure Him.

20. Christ claims for Himself just judgment, knowing indeed that He would not receive it ; but His example even in this has been of great use to His followers, who might otherwise have thought it their duty to be led as lambs to the slaughter, without appeal to law or justice. St. Paul imitated Him in Acts xvi. 37, and xxii. 25. He says that He taught 'openly,' as to the manner of His teaching, continually, as to the time, the synagogue and the temple being the usual places. What He taught in private was a fuller explanation of what He had said publicly.

21. So Paul (Acts xxiv. 12, 13). It was the right of every accused person to have some definite charge proved by witnesses.

22. The first but not the last blow. (See Isa. l. 6.) Think of the indignity as well as the pain of a blow, even to any one of us. A similar insult offered to Paul (Acts xxiii. 2).

23. How meek, yet how dignified this answer.

25. Peter's second denial. (See Matt. xxvi. 71, 72, Mark xiv. 69, 70, Luke xxii. 58.)

26, 27. Peter's third denial (Matt. xxvi. 73-75, Mark xiv. 70-72, Luke xxii. 59-62). No doubt the servant's relationship to Malchus drew his attention to the man who smote him, and thus enabled him to identify Peter.

28. St. John, having given the interview with Annas, omitted by the other Evangelists, now omits the trial before Caiaphas, recorded by the others. He was sent to Pilate as the necessary consequence of His having been condemned by Caiaphas, the chief priests, and elders. The utmost they could do was to pronounce Him *worthy* of death; they could not execute the sentence without Pilate's intervention; 'lest they should be defiled,' *i.e.* by mingling with Gentiles on the night before the passover, or rather, early in the morning. These men, in the very act of perpetrating the vilest crime ever committed, pacified conscience by being scrupulous on a point like *this*! It would be inconceivable were it not *true* (Matt. xxvii. 1, 2, Mark xv. 1, Luke xxiii. 1).

29. Pilate, informed of this scruple, respected it, and went out to *them*, absurd as he must have thought it.

30. Conscious that they had no case against Him, they speak of Him as an 'evil-doer,' just as if guilt had been proved against Him. Truly they were wise in their generation, for what *could* they prove of which Pilate could take cognizance? Evidently they wished Pilate to execute their own sentence, but not to act as judge.

31, 32. Pilate properly objected to this, and compelled them to acknowledge what doubtless he well knew, that they had no power in the matter. Had they been able to put Him to death, it would have been by stoning, which would not have been the death foretold (Psa. xxii. 16, Matt. xx. 19, John

xii. 32). Compare Exod. xii. 46 with John xix. 36, 37. About this period of the morning, Judas, in his agony of remorse, brought back the thirty pieces of silver; this took place in the Temple while Christ was before Pilate (See Matt. xxvii. 3-10).

33. 'Art Thou,' etc.? They had charged Him in Luke xxiii. 2 with calling Himself a king.

34. This was asked to bring out whether the word 'king' were meant in a political sense, with which Pilate had a right to deal.

35. A just and natural question, 'What hast Thou done?' He would hardly have trusted a malefactor's answer to such an inquiry.

36. Notice the fourfold 'My.' His answer affirms, proves, and re-affirms that His was no earthly sovereignty. Notice His calm courage, referred to in 1 Tim. vi. 13. In saying 'My kingdom is not of this world,' He does not say 'not *over* this world.' Explain the difference. Pilate would not value information as to what Christ's kingdom *was*; therefore he is only told what it was *not*, which was the point that concerned him. There is a glorious day not far off when the declaration in Rev. xi. 15 will receive triumphant fulfilment.

37. 'Thou sayest'; *i.e.* 'thou *truly* sayest'—a form of affirmation. 'Bear witness,' etc. Christ is called (Rev. iii. 14) 'the faithful and true Witness.'

38. How striking Pilate's question, 'What is truth?' Never were men's minds more unsettled than in those days. What an opportunity he lost by going out without an answer! What a book might be written about the golden opportunities that we lose, and that come but once, like this! God help us to discern and use them. 'I find no fault in Him at all!' Such was the impression left on Pilate.

39, 40. See Matt. xxvii. 15-18, and xxvii. 20-26, and Mark xv. 7-15, and Luke xxiii. 18, 19. From the time that Christ was taken to Pilate, as we see from verses 29, 33, and 38, Pilate entered and left the hall of judgment repeatedly, these

various movements showing his deep perplexity. Probably he sent Him to Herod either just before or just after the scourging (Luke xxiii. 7-12).

CHAPTER XIX.

1-3. FOR the scourging and the mockeries, see on Matt. xxvii. 26-31, and Mark xv. 15-20.

4-6. Pilate's second declaration of His innocence. (See Luke xxiii. 13-15, Mark xv. 12-14, and Matt. xxvii. 22, 23.)

5. There is no reason to think the memorable words, 'Behold the Man,' were spoken in scorn. How eagerly has the Church of Christ caught these words! Behold the 'Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief,' for *us*. Behold the Man Who is 'an hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest' (Isa. xxxii. 2); the Man 'more precious than fine gold,' etc. (Isa. xlii. 1). Pilate was evidently uneasy, and disappointed at the refusal of the Jews to accept Christ as the released prisoner.

7. 'Made Himself,' etc.; *i.e.* claimed to be the Messiah. They did not use that Name, because it would have been unintelligible to Pilate.

8. 'The more afraid'; this shows *previous* fear. Pilate's wife's dream, with other circumstances working in his mind, fully accounted for his fear (Matt. xxvii. 19).

9. 'Whence,' etc., not from what *place*, for he knew Christ came from Galilee; but what was His origin, His parentage? Christ might have awed him by the simple answer, 'I am the Son of God'; but He had said enough, and nothing would have been gained by prolonging the interview; therefore He held His peace.

10. How Pilate condemns *himself*! If he had the power, why not release the innocent?

11. Here He interposes, showing Pilate that the power to act in the matter was by Divine permission, which here means anything rather than *approval*. Define the difference. Pilate was a free agent, by his own confession; and the guilt is shared

between him and Christ's enemies—*unequally* shared, because theirs was so much the greater. They hated Him; Pilate feared, respected, and, in a certain sense, compassionated Him; but he loved himself and his worldly interests.

12. The answer to Pilate's appeal brought fiercer clamours, and the taunt, 'If thou release this man,' etc. This covert threat conquered the vacillating judge, to his own eternal infamy, and to that of those who, to destroy Christ, affected a zeal for Cæsar; even *he* was preferred to their own Messiah. This was the result of Pilate's third intercession; the fourth is given by St. Luke (xxiii. 4, 5).

13. 'Sat down'; a forensic term, meaning 'sat for judgment.' The 'pavement' was inlaid with pieces of marble, or with stones of various colours. Julius Cæsar brought such home, in his various expeditions, to adorn the prætorium. The Jews called the place 'Gabbatha,' an elevated piece of ground; the Romans called it the 'pavement,' from its being inlaid. (For Gabbatha, see Smith's 'Dictionary of the Bible.')

14. 'It was the preparation,' etc. Every Friday was called the preparation; *i.e.* the day before the Jewish Sabbath. Those are the best and happiest homes in which there is some 'preparation' for God's day. In what ways can we prepare? The first part of Prov. xvi. 1 suggests *one* way. The 'sixth hour' here probably means 6 a.m. as *we* reckon it. At the sixth hour by Jewish reckoning—*i.e.* at noon—began the mysterious darkness.

The words, 'Behold your King,' as well as those in the fifth verse, 'Behold the Man,' seem evidently spoken in scorn of the Jewish mob.

15. In answer to the ironical question, 'Shall I crucify your King?' the miscreants and their yet viler leaders cry, 'We have no king but Cæsar!' Little thought they that only forty years later, another Cæsar would miserably destroy their city.

For Pilate's fifth and sixth intercessions for Christ, see Luke xxiii. 13-16, Mark xv. 9, 10. For the bearing of the cross to Calvary, see Matt. xxvii. 32, Mark xv. 21, Luke xxiii. 26-33.

19. John gives this title, superscription, or accusation, as the Evangelists severally call it, more fully than the rest. Probably he alone of the eleven was an eye-witness of the crucifixion ; hence the greater minuteness of some of the details.

20-22. Only John gives this in full. Josephus says it was usual at that time to publish notices in different languages. The Jews carefully taught their children to read. They had prevailed on Pilate by urging that Christ had set Himself up for a King, and Pilate thus reminds them of it ; hence their complaint and his answer, which are recorded by St. John, and no other Evangelist.

23-37. The crucifixion. (See Matt. xxvii. 35-56 ; Mark xv. 24-41 ; Luke xxiii. 34-49.) The earthquake, and the opening of the graves (Matt. xxvii. 51-53).

31. With the merciful design of hastening death. The soldiers would be glad to have their duty over, and the Jews were forbidden, in Deut. xxi. 22, 23, to leave a body exposed on a tree all night.

32, 33. Notice how every incident was so ordered as to *prove* the fact of His death. There had been previous elements of suffering, both mental and physical, in His case that the malefactors had escaped ; no sharp thorns, no taunts for *them*, but a partial deadening of pain by the stupefying drink.

34. Further evidence that it was actual death ; no trance. Even in John's time there was a tendency in the Asiatic churches to doubt the reality of Christ's Body, and to deny that He came in the flesh at all, making the whole Gospel-history a kind of myth.

35. John alone uses these words.

38-40. See Matt. xxvii. 57-60, Mark xv. 42-46, and Luke xxiii. 50-53. As the crucifixion ended at 3 p.m., and the Passover began at four, it was needful to obtain and bury the sacred Body by that hour. Such, however, was the consternation at the darkness and the earthquake, that probably nothing was done in its usual course. But for Joseph's loving reverent care He would have been buried, could His enemies have accomplished it, in the common grave with the malefactors.

41, 42. Only this Gospel tells us that the Holy Sepulchre was in a garden nigh at hand. Laid in this new tomb, never used before ; no pretence could be made that some other body had risen, or that He revived by touching some prophet's bones, as in 2 Kings xiii. 21. It is striking to notice how misrepresentation was guarded against, except such as arose from the bitter malignity of hearts that no evidence could reach. In everything done for Him after His death, He was 'separated from sinners' (Heb. vii. 26). Joseph hewed this sepulchre doubtless with many a devout and peaceful thought of his own death ; but no idea could have crossed his mind of the wondrous honour to be conferred upon it. So it sometimes is in *our* lives that some right deed, some good work done, is turned by God's providence to higher results than we had hoped for. Put your hand earnestly to any work He gives you.

CHAPTER XX.

1-18. For the particulars of the resurrection, see Matt. xxviii. 1-8, Mark xvi. 1-11, Luke xxiv. 1-12.

3-8. Mary Magdalene ran with her imperfect knowledge of the circumstances to Peter and John, who hurried to the sepulchre, John, the younger, arriving first, then Peter, and probably last came Mary. Very minute are John's details, telling how, though he arrived first, Peter was the first to enter, and describing the position and orderly arrangement of the linen in which the Body had been wrapped. 'Linen cloths' should not be understood here to mean apparel. Doubtless the angels folded them, and the fact of their being left there shows the absurdity of the lie that He had been removed by the disciples. Moreover, their being so neatly arranged was evidence that no thieves had carried Him away ; they would have been in too much haste and fear of detection. John saw and believed ; in other words, he believed *because* of what he saw, not because he remembered or understood the promise of the resurrection. What a glorious moment it must have been when he *did* remember and understand ! They do

not appear to have seen the angels, though the women saw them (Luke xxiv. 12).

10. Went away perplexed ; perhaps dismayed.

11. Loving Mary ! weeping over that which, in another moment, would fill her with joy unspeakable. How often *we* weep over disguised blessings, and feel overwhelmed with care and trouble ! and our desolate hearts say, 'All these things are against me,' when all the while they are working together for our good—dovetailing in the most wonderful manner ; and perhaps the next turn in God's Providence makes all plain. Oh ! to *trust* while He keeps us waiting ! there is where we all fail so sadly.

12. At last she gazes through her tears into the empty grave ; but *was* it empty ? Ah, no ! two white-robed messengers from the world of light are seated there, waiting with words of gentle rebuke for her grief. The other women had been 'affrighted' at the vision (see Mark xvi. 5, and Luke xxiv. 6) ; but Mary, full of the longing to recover the lost Body of her Lord, had no room in her heart for fear ; no inclination to think of *herself* at all. One strong emotion excludes for the time all others.

13. It is as though she said, 'How can I help weeping when they have taken away my Lord ?'

14, 15. Then, hoping for no comfort, waiting for no answer, from them, she turned desolately away, and saw Jesus, but without recognising Him. So Jacob might have seen Joseph, the desire of his eyes, in Egypt, had he accompanied his sons on their journeys to buy food, without recognising in his glory the son whom he mourned as dead. Afraid, it may be, of startling her with too sudden an appearance, He seems to have made Himself known gradually. Doubtless something in His words or manner, or some familiar tone in His voice, was all unconsciously to herself preparing her for the revelation which was to follow. Jesus asks the same question that the angels had asked. She was so intent on seeking her dear Lord's dead Body, that she could not realise, or even imagine, that her

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15-18. Peter's following afar off. (See Matt. xxvi. 58, Mark xiv. 54, and Luke xxii. 54.) It is noticeable how John avoids mentioning his own name; here he calls himself 'that disciple who was known to the high-priest.'

15. John entered as a privileged acquaintance, and secured admission for Peter, who meanwhile waited at the door. The trial was probably held in a room open to the court, but on a higher level.

19-24. Only John gives this dialogue, which took place probably about 2 a.m.

19. Evidently Jesus and His disciples were supposed to form some secret party. Caiaphas hoped to entrap Him into some statements that could injure Him.

20. Christ claims for Himself just judgment, knowing indeed that He would not receive it; but His example even in this has been of great use to His followers, who might otherwise have thought it their duty to be led as lambs to the slaughter, without appeal to law or justice. St. Paul imitated Him in Acts xvi. 37, and xxii. 25. He says that He taught 'openly,' as to the manner of His teaching, continually, as to the time, the synagogue and the temple being the usual places. What He taught in private was a fuller explanation of what He had said publicly.

21. So Paul (Acts xxiv. 12, 13). It was the right of every accused person to have some definite charge proved by witnesses.

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14. The world's hatred should be rather a source of joy (Matt. v. 10-12).

15. No; for they had a glorious work to do on earth, which they could not do in heaven. 'Keep them from the Evil One,' and all earth's wickedness.

16. John xv. 18, 19.

17. As the prayer 'keep them,' etc., was negative, so 'sanctify' is positive. 'Thy Word is truth.' He says, '*I* am the Truth.' What an insight Pilate might have gained had he but waited for an answer to his own important question—'What is truth?' Even in everyday matters, if the truth cannot help us, nothing can.

18. Here is their Divine commission, once more repeated in Christ's solemn parting charge (Matt. xxviii. 19, 20).

19. 'I sanctify Myself'; *i.e.* consecrate Myself; that they may be both consecrated and made holy. A consecrated vessel is a vessel set apart to a holy use—like those Belshazzar profanely used; it is not in *itself* holy. Christ was both holy and consecrated. His Apostles, whom He was consecrating to their hallowed work, must be made personally holy. Are *we* vessels 'meet for the Master's use'? (2 Tim. ii. 21). How can we be made meet?

20. What a comfort for *us* to know that *we*, too, were thought of and remembered in that last prayer! for *we* believe on Him through their word handed down to us. 'Believe on *Me* through their word': not believe in the Church, or the Pope, or the Virgin, or any body of Christians whatever, but for them 'which believe on *Me*.'

21. *i.e.* knit up into a living unity amongst themselves, and into a higher unity with the Godhead. The illuminating transforming influences of the Spirit shall in time force conviction on the world. The many differences of opinion amongst us, and the bitterness with which people differ, weaken the impression that religion makes on the world, and drive many to infidelity.

xii. 32). Compare Exod. xii. 46 with John xix. 36, 37. About this period of the morning, Judas, in his agony of remorse, brought back the thirty pieces of silver; this took place in the Temple while Christ was before Pilate (See Matt. xxvii. 3-10).

33. 'Art Thou,' etc.? They had charged Him in Luke xxiii. 2 with calling Himself a king.

34. This was asked to bring out whether the word 'king' were meant in a political sense, with which Pilate had a right to deal.

35. A just and natural question, 'What hast Thou done?' He would hardly have trusted a malefactor's answer to such an inquiry.

36. Notice the fourfold 'My.' His answer affirms, proves, and re-affirms that His was no earthly sovereignty. Notice His calm courage, referred to in 1 Tim. vi. 13. In saying 'My kingdom is not of this world,' He does not say 'not *over* this world.' Explain the difference. Pilate would not value information as to what Christ's kingdom *was*; therefore he is only told what it was *not*, which was the point that concerned him. There is a glorious day not far off when the declaration in Rev. xi. 15 will receive triumphant fulfilment.

37. 'Thou sayest'; i.e. 'thou *truly* sayest'—a form of affirmation. 'Bear witness,' etc. Christ is called (Rev. iii. 14) 'the faithful and true Witness.'

38. How striking Pilate's question, 'What is truth?' Never were men's minds more unsettled than in those days. What an opportunity he lost by going out without an answer! What a book might be written about the golden opportunities that *we* lose, and that come but once, like this! God help us to discern and use them. 'I find no fault in Him at all!' Such was the impression left on Pilate.

39, 40. See Matt. xxvii. 15-18, and xxvii. 20-26, and Mark xv. 7-15, and Luke xxiii. 18, 19. From the time that Christ was taken to Pilate, as we see from verses 29, 33, and 38, Pilate entered and left the hall of judgment repeatedly, these

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17. See verse 35 of chapter xiii.

18. See Matt. x. 25. How often these words would encourage them in the hard path they were to tread! The wicked have ever hated the good, because their piety was a continual reproach. The world hated Christ and His truest, noblest, followers.

19. If as you grow up, you find that the worldly flatter and make much of you, it will be a bad sign for your soul-health and your prospects for eternity.

20. See Luke xii. 49-53. How can He both send fire and give peace? The fire of outward tribulation cannot reach the *heart-peace* that Christ gives.

21. They would be hated for their Master's sake more than for their own (1 Peter iv. 12-14).

22. They would have been innocent of the crowning sin of rejecting their Messiah. In this, like the Amorites, they filled up the measure of their iniquities. Awful measure! as if God's long-suffering waited till the very last moment possible. It reminds one of that solemn word Tekel (Dan. v. 27). God does not punish in sudden wrath as men often do; the iniquities are *measured*, the sinner *weighed* in the balances. No lost soul will ever feel *unjustly* punished; 'no excuse for their sin.' We are fond of excusing our sins under plausible names; avarice is called 'duty to a man's family'; pride is 'self-respect'; stinginess, 'economy.' The hour of death strips off these flimsy devices, and then it is *too late*.

23. It was not indifference, not simple careless rejection—it was active hatred, the hostility of sin to holiness. Mention the first instance of that. (Gen. iv. 3-8).

24, 25. 'Works,' etc. John vii. 31.; 'hated' (Psa. lxi. 4, Psa. xxxv. 19).

26. See John xiv. 16, 17.

27. In bearing witness to their Master they passed all their remaining days; it was the work for which they lived and died. Luke i. 2 refers to their having been eyewitnesses from the beginning. It is full of interest to notice in the Acts and

Epistles and the Revelation how much more they had gained, from their constant association with Him, than we should have known from the history in the Gospels. The descent of the Spirit brought out what lay buried.

CHAPTER XVI.

1. Matt. xi. 6, xiii. 21. We tread no smooth, easy, beaten path to heaven ; but when we get there, oh ! what rich amends !

2. See John ix. 22. 'Killeth you.' How soon fulfilled in Stephen's case ! (Acts vii. 59, 60). Only hardened hearts and seared consciences thus reason, and thus delude themselves ; and every stage of the hardening and searing is their own act—their own sin. Nothing less than a wondrous vision of the Saviour arrested the persecutor Saul ; and, to the very last, he humbled himself for it (1 Cor. xv. 9). Prov. xiv. 12 shows how far wrong we may go without knowing it. 'Hold up my goings in Thy paths, that my footsteps slip not,' is a prayer we should use daily.

3. Hitherto He Himself had borne their chief hatred ; but, when He was far beyond its reach, it would fall upon His disciples.

4. Christ had told them already (see Luke vi. 22) ; but not in such definite words as in verse 2. He was with them then, their Protector, the Prince of Life, in Whose presence none could kill them. He would have them know from the outset that they must follow Him through much tribulation ; but it was time enough to know exactly how great things they must suffer for Him, when they knew how much greater things He did and suffered for *them*, and how matchless is His power to sustain ! Very likely Paul, the aged, never took so joyful a walk in his life as when he went to his execution beyond the gates of Rome.

5. They had asked in a certain way (John xiii. 36, and xiv. 5), but He wanted more eager intelligent inquiry.

6. Sorrow had paralyzed them ; He would now rouse them.

Much would depend on them in the future; their energies must awake.

7. How natural are those lines of Keble!—

‘ My Saviour, can it ever be,
That I should gain by losing Thee ?’

As the high priest had to enter within the veil, so was it needful for us that our High Priest should pass into the heavens (Heb. iv. 14), where He ever liveth to make intercession for us.

8. Conviction implies guilt, and includes reproof; but reproof does not include conviction.

9. All sin has its root in unbelief. The fatal seed of unbelief, planted in Eve's heart, was the beginning of man's first disobedience. See Gen. iii. 1-6. Had she continued to believe that God saw and would punish, she would never have disobeyed His command. We commonly say that disobedience was her first sin; but, in truth, unbelief preceded it.

10. Undoubtedly Christ's going to His Father was the most convincing proof possible of His righteousness, and of His being what He claimed to be. Else God would neither have raised Him from the dead, nor permitted Him visibly to ascend into heaven.

11. Various meanings have been assigned to this. Some refer it to the grand victory that Christ, by dying, obtained over Satan; and probably this is the true interpretation, though his final judgment yet awaits him.

12. Christ was sowing seed in their hearts, which the Spirit would bring to perfection.

13. Oh! to be guided into all truth by the Spirit of Truth Himself! That word ‘guide’ is full of meaning—we are not compelled, or violently urged; but the teachable and childlike are gently led by One Who knows every step of the way. O, Holy Spirit, lead *us* in the way that we must go! *Ask* for more of His help, and you will *certainly* have it. The promise, in Luke xi. 13, is an *absolute* promise, contingent only upon our asking. He would explain to them the past, guide them

in the present, and give them marvellous glimpses into the future, for which we are yet waiting. Most of our insight into it comes from the Epistles and the Revelation. In the last especially we seem to stand at one of the doors in our Father's House, and to catch, as it opens for a moment to admit some ransomed soul, an echo of unearthly music, a fragrance as of flowers that never bloomed on earth, or the passing gleam of white glistening robes. Happy for us who *know* that our own lost treasures are *there*, wearing the spotless robes, swelling the glorious harmony, drinking in unimaginable joys! Happy, too, are we if we can say, 'I, too, am *going Home*'!

14. It is the Spirit's great work and office to reveal Christ to us as our own all-atoning, all-sufficient Saviour; to enable our hearts to lay hold upon Him and say, 'He is mine'—'He loved *me*, and gave Himself for *me*.'

15. We have here a wonderful glimpse into what the Father, Son, and Spirit are to each other. One God, yet how distinctly Three Persons! We cannot grasp it, but our own complex nature, body, soul, and spirit, gives some clue. There is the body, with all its various wants, which are common to animals as well as to us; then, going a step higher, we see, in many animals—a faithful, intelligent dog, for instance—higher faculties than he would possess had he *only* a body; he remembers, he reasons, he distinguishes one object or person from another—to some extent he understands the language of his country, whatever tongue is spoken. He has therefore two natures, and *we* have a third, one which cannot perish through all eternity.

16. 'Ye behold Me no more'; because He would be resting in the grave. 'Ye shall see Me'; during the forty days preceding His ascension.

17, 18. How natural this perplexity! Dimly it had dawned upon them that He was about to die; but, as yet, they failed to grasp the blessed facts of the resurrection—of His brief sojourn after it, and of His glorious ascension; yet all this would be accomplished during the next six weeks (Acts i. 3-9).

19. Perhaps this should not be put in the form of a question, as He certainly knew what was passing in their minds ; it may rather mean, 'You are inquiring,' etc. ; this is borne out by verse 30.

20. The enemies of Christ would triumph in His death, and say, 'Now we have put Him down at last' ! but their joy would be brief ; His disciples would mourn, but their sorrow would be 'turned into joy' after His resurrection. The enemies had small reason to rejoice, but *they* had deep cause for joy. Their heaviness endured two brief nights, and on the Easter morning joy came, so great as to be perfectly bewildering, received with incredulity as too good to be true. 'Turned into joy' ; how much more than merely 'comforted' ! God's overflowing bounty often does this for us still, even in temporal things, and especially when He turns sorrow for sin into the blessed sense of pardon and peace. There is doubtless also a reference here to the triumphant gladness of the redeemed at Christ's Second Advent. Shall *we* share it ?

21. He gives this as a familiar instance of sorrow transformed into exquisite happiness.

22. The resurrection should be so fully proved to them, by sight, by touch, and hearing, and many other tokens, that no doubt of it should ever again cross their minds. 'Taketh from you.' Earthly joys may easily be taken away, even that purest, sweetest joy of a mother in her child ; the child suffers, the mother's heart aches for it ; perhaps the little one grows up cold and careless, a deep sorrow to her ; or her darling is gathered early to the Father's Home, and the crown of her life's happiness is placed beyond her reach. The 'joy' here meant, no man can give, and no man can intermeddle with it.

23. 'Ask Me nothing,' by reason of the fulness of the Spirit's teaching. Hitherto they had come to Him with many a question and difficulty ; doubtless they came continually, but this was ending now. How often they must have said later on, 'I wish I had asked Him this or that' !

24. Whilst He dwelt with them He had not taught them to

ask in His name, which accounts for the omission of it in the Lord's prayer. When He was glorified, they were to ask in His name.

25. 'In proverbs,' or obscurely; 'the hour cometh,' *i.e.* during the forty days after His resurrection.

26, 27. This does not mean that He will not intercede for us, for He ever liveth to make such intercession (Heb. vii. 25), but that He will pray to a *loving, willing* ear; 'the Father Himself loveth you' on account of your love to Me. Faith in Christ is *dear* to God, and without such faith it is impossible to please Him (Heb. xi. 6).

28. This echo of what He had just said seems like self-communing, as though He loved to dwell upon it. 'I came out,' etc. Here is His Divine origin. 'I came into the world' by My incarnation. 'I leave the world' by My death. 'I go unto the Father' by My ascension. These words contain a summary of the Gospel.

29. What had perplexed them was verse 16: His departure, His return, His final going away. This He had now explained; at least sufficiently for these willing anxious learners to catch a glimpse of His meaning. Very touching is their eagerness to grasp it.

30. *i.e.* believe more firmly; they had believed before.

31. As if to say, 'Do you believe?' 'Well, if you do.' There almost seems a delicate irony in this, read in the light of what immediately followed.

32. Here He gives one more warning of what they little knew that they were about to do. As if to remind them how sorely they would be tested that very night, He says, 'The hour cometh, yea, is come,' 'Leave Me alone'; what a deep sense of wrong breathes in these sorrowful words! Yet 'not alone' till in the bitterest hour of all, He cried: 'My God, My God, why hast *Thou* forsaken Me?' *Was* He alone then? Never, in reality, but to His own consciousness it seemed that the thick black cloud of man's sins had hidden the Father from Him. He was to bear even *this* for us, and to utter the saddest, most

see, though the rest assured him that they *had seen* the risen Lord. He dreaded a mistake so intensely, that he does not so much as say, 'I wish I *could* see, I wish I *could* believe.' In this forlorn despondency, a state only too natural to his character, he remained a whole week—a week full of gladness to the other ten. Unbelief costs us dear. It is a sin that brings immediate punishment, as well as future loss.

26. Eight days later—a week from the glorious Easter-tide—He came again; thus sanctioning the change of the Lord's Day from the Jewish Sabbath. He had already appeared four times: 1st, to Mary Magdalene; 2nd, to the two disciples going to Emmaus; 3rd, to Simon Peter; 4th, to the ten, without Thomas; and 5th, to the eleven—Thomas took care to be present this time; His 6th appearance was to the women; His 7th to the five hundred—probably in Galilee; His 8th at the Sea of Tiberias; His 9th to St. James (1 Cor. xv. 7); His *tenth and last*, on Ascension Day.*

27. Thomas is bidden to take the proof he had required. How gently and tenderly Christ dealt with him! How needful the caution, 'Be not faithless,' etc.

28. That Thomas did *not* do what he had before insisted on, is quite clear from verse 29. *Seeing* was believing; his doubts rolled away in an instant; and in full exultant faith, he says, 'My Lord, and my God.' No more glorious words can be spoken by human or angelic voices. Not only 'Lord' and 'God,' but '*my* Lord—*my* God.' Is He this to *you*?

29. Christ's words are those of measured commendation, but also of implied and painfully-felt rebuke. To us who have not seen, and yet believe, how blessed are the closing words of this verse! But is our faith a true, a *living* faith? or is it a mere assent of the understanding, with as little influence on our lives as our belief in the landing of Julius Cæsar on our shores?

30, 31. It would almost seem that this Gospel has two

* See Greswell's 'Harmonia Evangelica.' Commentators differ as to the chronological order of Christ's various appearances after the Resurrection.

endings—here, and in xxi. 25—and that the closing chapter is added as we add a P.S. to a letter. ‘*Life in His Name.*’ *Believe and live.*

CHAPTER XXI.

1, 2. It is instructive to notice how, in this time of wondering gladness, when Christ appeared in the midst of them so often and so mysteriously, they knew not whence or how, the Apostles still continued their lawful calling. They did not seclude themselves to meditate on the marvellous sight of Him, coming where no mortal body could have come unseen, unheard, through locked doors—yet clothed in flesh, with pierced Hands and Feet and Side.

3. Still, as before, Peter took the lead in speaking, and the rest follow his suggestion. They never once seem to have reproached or shunned him for his recent grievous sin. Christ had pardoned him, and that was enough for them.

4. The night's toil was all in vain—not a single fish was caught—that the greatness of the coming miracle might appear more fully. This is often God's plan, to let us thoroughly realise our trouble, or want, or danger, *before* He helps us. Sometimes it is otherwise: we pass within a hair-breadth of the peril, and only know it when we are again in safety, as a traveller may cross some frail bridge over a chasm, and see it sway and fall the moment he is at the other side. Jesus stood on the shore, but they did not recognise Him. He seems to have come in varying forms, as when Mary took Him for ‘the gardener,’ and the two journeying to Emmaus walked and talked with Him as ‘a stranger.’

5. How they must have wondered at the kindly appellation, ‘Children!’ He had used it before (see Mark x. 24). Yet they seem not to have recognised the voice. He knew they had no food; but, as usual, they must tell their need.

6. As in a similar miracle (Luke v. 6), the supply was greater than they could receive.

7. And now the beloved disciple recognises Him and exclaims, 'It is the Lord ?' Peter cast himself into the sea (not for the first time) to go to Jesus ; probably he purposed to wade rather than to swim, or his coat would have hindered him. On the former occasion (Matt. xiv. 28-31) they were in deep water, 'in the midst of the sea.'

8. The rest followed in their boat, dragging after them their unexpected store.

9. Whether this was miraculous provision, or whether willing angel hands had lighted the fire, and prepared the meal which they were not to share with their dear Lord and His Apostles, we cannot conjecture ; but 1 Kings xix. 5-8 seems to throw much light upon it.

10. Observe the double supply—His and theirs. His quite ready for the wearied men after their long night's disappointing toil ; but *their* fish also was to be used. When materials were at hand, Christ, Who could work without any, made use of them. Illustrate this.

11. Peter, in obedience to the command, went, drew the net to land, and apparently stayed with the rest, counting the fish, and ascertaining the soundness of the nets. Perhaps, in staying to do this, he showed more of Martha's spirit than of Mary's. Certainly she would have hurried back with the fish, and thought only of *Him*. It is a mistake to think the Martha spirit is not continually found in *men*. In excuse for the disciples, it may be said that they received no rebuke from their Lord ; and also that probably they had no idea how soon He was to leave them. Moreover, the Church *needs* Martha's busy helpful hands, as well as Mary's loving devout spirit ; Martha's love took one form, Mary's another. Jesus loved them both.

12, 13. At His condescending invitation they sat down, but in silence ; doubtless lost in wonder.

14. His third meeting with the assembled disciples, subsequent to that on His resurrection-day.

15. And now, the hallowed meal ended, Christ addresses

Peter with the question, “ ‘ Lovest thou Me more than these ’ love Me ? ” In Matt. xxvi. 33, Peter had boasted of the love he bore his Master. He speaks more humbly and wisely this time ; not rashly affirming that he loved Christ more than his brethren did—how indeed *could* he ?—but appealing to Christ’s own Omniscience in proof of the reality of his love. Christ’s answer seems to say, ‘ *Prove* it—feed My lambs ’ ; i.e. young and tender disciples ; not necessarily young in age—babes in Christ.

16. Christ repeats only a part of His question ; He omits the words, ‘ more than these.’ Peter’s humble silence on this point was taken as a confession of past sin and folly. Our tender Saviour never ‘ breaks the bruised reed.’ We are sometimes slow to forgive a deep personal injury ; but *not so Jesus*. Let us *try* to follow in His footsteps ; God help us so to do !

17. Peter’s three denials were painfully recalled to him by Christ’s three solemn questions. We know that God promises to ‘ remember our sin no more ’ (Jer. xxxi. 34) ; but He nowhere bids *us* forget it. On the contrary, even His dearest children reap the fruits of sin to the very last in many cases. Peter was *grieved*, as well he might be, at this painful reminder of his thrice-repeated sin ; and answered, in the touching words, ‘ Lord, Thou knowest,’ etc. Can *we* say this ?

18. ‘ Stretch forth thine hands,’ to be nailed to the cross ; his last voluntary movement of them. ‘ Whither thou wouldest not ’ does not mean that Peter would be an unwilling martyr ; perhaps it means that flesh and blood would naturally shrink from such a death. It is almost certain that Peter was crucified in old age with his head downward, by his own request, feeling unworthy of the honour of suffering exactly as his Lord had done. His is the only instance in Scripture of anyone knowing long beforehand both the time and the manner of his death. Of course he did not know the date at which he would die, but that it would be in old age. Hezekiah knew the date, but not the kind of death (Isa. xxxviii. 5). Mention

any foretold deaths (1 Kings xiv. 12 ; 2 Kings i. 4). Explain *why* God hides these things from us.

19. In what collect do we read of those who were made to glorify God by their deaths ? It almost seems that the honour of martyrdom was promised to Peter by way of comforting him. The noblest object we can possibly set before us is to glorify God in life and in death.

20, 21. Peter seems to have made no comment on his own destiny, but he at once asks what John's will be.

22. Christ's answer fully proves His Godhead, for the issues of life and death are in God's Hand only ; yet He says, ' If I will that he tarry,' etc., therefore the issues of life and death are in Christ's Hand, *therefore* Christ is God. Peter must mind his own work, and not pry into the destiny of John.

23. How natural, yet how total, a mistake ! The last recorded mistake of the disciples, as given in the Gospels.

24, 25. Doubtless the Evangelist means, not that the world could not hold the books that might have been written, but that men's minds could not receive or contain such a mass of information. Without doubt, we are told far more already than we are worthy to know, or could expect the Holy Spirit to condescend to teach us. For fuller knowledge we must wait a little season ; and *then* shall we know, even as we are known, when earth's broad shadows pass away in the Eternal Light. Amen.

THE END.

